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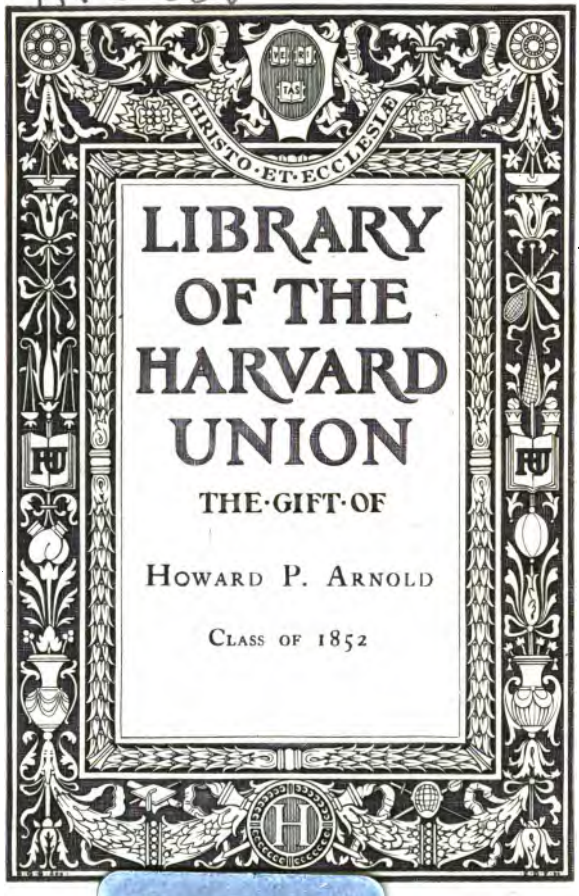
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VOL. 1029.

HE KNEW HE WAS RIGHT BY A. TROLLOPE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

HE KNEW HE WAS RIGHT

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1869.

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HE KNEW HE WAS RIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

Hugh Stanbury smokes another Pipe.

TREVELYAN was gone, and Bozzle alone knew his address. During the first fortnight of her residence at St. Diddulph's Mrs. Trevelyan received two letters from Lady Milborough, in both of which she was recommended, indeed tenderly implored, to be submissive to her husband. "Anything," said Lady Milborough, "is better than separation." In answer to the second letter Mrs. Trevelyan told the old lady that she had no means by which she could shew any submission to her husband, even if she were so minded. Her husband had gone away, she did not know whither, and she had no means by which she could communicate with him. And then came a packet to her from her father and mother, despatched from the islands after the receipt by Lady Rowley of the melancholy tidings of the journey to Nuncombe Putney. Both Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley were full of anger against Trevelyan, and wrote as though the husband could certainly be brought back to a sense of his duty, if they only were present. This packet had been at Nuncombe Putney, and contained a sealed note from Sir Marmaduke addressed to Mr. Trevelyan. Lady Rowley explained that it was impossible that they should get to England earlier than

in the spring. "I would come myself at once and leave papa to follow," said Lady Rowley, "only for the children. If I were to bring them, I must take a house for them, and the expense would ruin us. Papa has written to Mr. Trevelyan in a way that he thinks will bring him to reason."

But how was this letter, by which the husband was to be brought to reason, to be put into the husband's hands? Mrs. Trevelyan applied to Mr. Bideawhile and to Lady Milborough, and to Stanbury, for Trevelyan's address; but was told by each of them that nothing was known of his whereabouts. She did not apply to Mr. Bozzle, although Mr. Bozzle was more than once in her neighbourhood; but as yet she knew nothing of Mr. Bozzle. The replies from Mr. Bideawhile and from Lady Milborough came by the post; but Hugh Stanbury thought that duty required him to make another journey to St. Diddulph's and carry his own answer with him.

And on this occasion Fortune was either very kind to him,—or very unkind. Whichever it was, he found himself alone for a few seconds in the parsonage parlour with Nora Rowley. Mr. Outhouse was away at the time. Emily had gone up-stairs for the boy; and Mrs. Outhouse, suspecting nothing, had followed her. "Miss Rowley," said he, getting up from his seat, "if you think it will do any good I will follow Trevelyan till I find him."

"How can you find him? Besides, why should you give up your own business?"

"I would do anything—to serve your sister." This he said with hesitation in his voice, as though he did not dare to speak all that he desired to have spoken.

"I am sure that Emily is very grateful," said Nora; "but she would not wish to give you such trouble as that."

"I would do anything for your sister," he repeated, "——for your sake, Miss Rowley." This was the first time that he had ever spoken a word to her in such a strain, and it would be hardly too much to say that her heart was sick for some such expression. But now that it had come, though there was a sweetness about it that was delicious to her, she was absolutely silenced by it. And she was at once not only silent, but stern, rigid, and apparently cold. Stanbury could not but feel as he looked at her that he had offended her. "Perhaps I ought not to say as much," said he; "but it is so."

"Mr. Stanbury," said she, "that is nonsense. It is of my sister, not of me, that we are speaking."

Then the door was opened and Emily came in with her child, followed by her aunt. There was no other opportunity, and perhaps it was well for Nora and for Hugh that there should have been no other. Enough had been said to give her comfort; and more might have led to his discomposure. As to that matter on which he was presumed to have come to St. Diddulph's, he could do nothing. He did not know Trevelyan's address, but did know that Trevelyan had abandoned the chambers in Lincoln's Inn. And then he found himself compelled to confess that he had quarrelled with Trevelyan, and that they had parted in anger on the day of their joint visit to the East. "Everybody who knows him must quarrel with him," said Mrs. Outhouse. Hugh when he took his leave was treated by them all as a friend who had been gained. Mrs. Outhouse was

gracious to him. Mrs. Trevelyan whispered a word to him of her own trouble. "If I can hear anything of him, you may be sure that I will let you know," he said. Then it was Nora's turn to bid him adieu. There was nothing to be said. No word could be spoken before others that should be of any avail. But as he took her hand in his he remembered the reticence of her fingers on that former day, and thought that he was sure there was a difference.

On this occasion he made his journey back to the end of Chancery Lane on the top of an omnibus; and as he lit his little pipe, disregarding altogether the scrutiny of the public, thoughts passed through his mind similar to those in which he had indulged as he sat smoking on the corner of the churchyard wall at Nuncombe Putney. He declared to himself that he did love this girl; and as it was so, would it not be better, at any rate more manly, that he should tell her so honestly, than go on groping about with half-expressed words when he saw her, thinking of her and yet hardly daring to go near her, bidding himself to forget her although he knew that such forgetting was impossible, hankering after the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand, and something of the tenderness of returned affection,—and yet regarding her as a prize altogether out of his reach! Why should she be out of his reach? She had no money, and he had not a couple of hundred pounds in the world. But he was earning an income which would give them both shelter and clothes and bread and cheese.

What reader is there, male or female, of such stories as is this, who has not often discussed in his or her own mind the different sides of this question of love

and marriage? On either side enough may be said by any arguer to convince at any rate himself. It must be wrong for a man, whose income is both insufficient and precarious also, not only to double his own cares and burdens, but to place the weight of that doubled burden on other shoulders besides his own,—on shoulders that are tender and soft, and ill adapted to the carriage of any crushing weight. And then that doubled burden,—that burden of two mouths to be fed, of two backs to be covered, of two minds to be satisfied, is so apt to double itself again and again. The two so speedily become four, and six! And then there is the feeling that that kind of semi-poverty, which has in itself something of the pleasantness of independence, when it is borne by a man alone, entails the miseries of a draggle-tailed and querulous existence when it is imposed on a woman who has in her own home enjoyed the comforts of affluence. As a man thinks of all this, if he chooses to argue with himself on that side, there is enough in the argument to make him feel that not only as a wise man but as an honest man, he had better let the young lady alone. She is well as she is, and he sees around him so many who have tried the chances of marriage and who are not well! Look at Jones with his wan, worn wife and his five children, Jones who is not yet thirty, of whom he happens to know that the wretched man cannot look his doctor in the face, and that the doctor is as necessary to the man's house as is the butcher! What heart can Jones have for his work with such a burden as this upon his shoulders? And so the thinker, who argues on that side, resolves that the young lady shall go her own way for him.

But the arguments on the other side are equally cogent, and so much more alluring! And they are used by the same man with reference to the same passion, and are intended by him to put himself right in his conduct in reference to the same dear girl. Only the former line of thoughts occurred to him on a Saturday, when he was ending his week rather gloomily, and this other way of thinking on the same subject has come upon him on a Monday, as he is beginning his week with renewed hope. Does this young girl of his heart love him? And if so, their affection for each other being thus reciprocal, is she not entitled to an expression of her opinion and her wishes on this difficult subject? And if she be willing to run the risk and to encounter the dangers,—to do so on his behalf, because she is willing to share everything with him, —is it becoming in him, a man, to fear what she does not fear? If she be not willing let her say so. If there be any speaking, he must speak first;—but she is entitled, as much as he is, to her own ideas respecting their great outlook into the affairs of the world. And then is it not manifestly God's ordinance that a man should live together with a woman? How poor a creature does the man become who has shirked his duty in this respect, who has done nothing to keep the world going, who has been willing to ignore all affection so that he might avoid all burdens, and who has put into his own belly ever good thing that has come to him, either by the earning of his own hands or from the bounty and industry of others! Of course there is a risk; but what excitement is there in anything in which there is none? So on the Tuesday he speaks his mind to the young lady, and tells her can-

didly that there will be potatoes for the two of them,—sufficient, as he hopes, of potatoes, but no more. As a matter of course the young lady replies that she for her part will be quite content to take the parings for her own eating. Then they rush deliciously into each others arms and the matter is settled. For, though the convictions arising from the former line of argument may be set aside as often as need be, those reached from the latter are generally conclusive. That such a settlement will always be better for the young gentleman and the young lady concerned than one founded on a sterner prudence is more than one may dare to say; but we do feel sure that that country will be most prosperous in which such leaps in the dark are made with the greatest freedom.

Our friend Hugh, as he sat smoking on the knife-board of the omnibus, determined that he would risk everything. If it were ordained that prudence should prevail, the prudence should be hers. Why should he take upon himself to have prudence enough for two, seeing that she was so very discreet in all her bearings? Then he remembered the touch of her hand, which he still felt upon his palm as he sat handling his pipe, and he told himself that after that he was bound to say a word more. And moreover he confessed to himself that he was compelled by a feeling that mastered him altogether. He could not get through an hour's work without throwing down his pen and thinking of Nora Rowley. It was his destiny to love her,—and there was, to his mind, a mean, pettifogging secrecy, amounting almost to daily lying, in his thus loving her and not telling her that he loved her. It might well be that she should rebuke him; but he

thought that he could bear that. It might well be that he had altogether mistaken that touch of her hand. After all it had been the slightest possible motion of no more than one finger. But he would at any rate know the truth. If she would tell him at once that she did not care for him, he thought that he could get over it; but life was not worth having while he lived in this shifty, dubious, and uncomfortable state. So he made up his mind that he would go to St. Diddulph's with his heart in his hand.

In the mean time, Mr. Bozzle had been twice to St. Diddulph's;—and now he made a third journey there, two days after Stanbury's visit. Trevelyan, who, in truth, hated the sight of the man, and who suffered agonies in his presence, had, nevertheless, taught himself to believe that he could not live without his assistance. That it should be so was a part of the cruelty of his lot. Who else was there that he could trust? His wife had renewed her intimacy with Colonel Osborne the moment that she had left him. Mrs. Stanbury, who had been represented to him as the most correct of matrons, had at once been false to him and to her trust, in allowing Colonel Osborne to enter her house. Mr. and Mrs. Outhouse, with whom his wife had now located herself, not by his orders, were, of course, his enemies. His old friend, Hugh Stanbury, had gone over to the other side, and had quarrelled with him purposely, with malice prepense, because he would not submit himself to the caprices of the wife who had injured him. His own lawyer had refused to act for him; and his fast and oldest ally, the very person who had sounded in his ear the earliest warning note against that odious villain, whose daily work it

was to destroy the peace of families,—even Lady Milborough had turned against him! Because he would not follow the stupid prescription which she, with pig-headed obstinacy, persisted in giving,—because he would not carry his wife off to Naples,—she was ill-judging and inconsistent enough to tell him that he was wrong! Who was then left to him but Bozzle? Bozzle was very disagreeable. Bozzle said things, and made suggestions to him which were as bad as pins stuck into his flesh. But Bozzle was true to his employer, and could find out facts. Had it not been for Bozzle, he would have known nothing of the Colonel's journey to Devonshire. Had it not been for Bozzle, he would never have heard of the correspondence; and, therefore, when he left London, he gave Bozzle a roving commission; and when he went to Paris, and from Paris onwards, over the Alps into Italy, he furnished Bozzle with his address. At this time, in the midst of all his misery, it never occurred to him to inquire of himself whether it might be possible that his old friends were right, and that he himself was wrong. From morning to night he sang to himself melancholy silent songs of inward wailing, as to the cruelty of his own lot in life;—and, in the mean time, he employed Bozzle to find out for him how far that cruelty was carried.

Mr. Bozzle was, of course, convinced that the lady whom he was employed to watch was—no better than she ought to be. That is the usual Bozzlian language for broken vows, secrecy, intrigue, dirt, and adultery. It was his business to obtain evidence of her guilt. There was no question to be solved as to her innocency. The Bozzlian mind would have regarded any

such suggestion as the product of a green softness, the possession of which would have made him quite unfit for his profession. He was aware that ladies who are no better than they should be are often very clever,—so clever, as to make it necessary that the Bozzles who shall at last confound them should be first-rate Bozzles, Bozzles quite at the top of their profession,—and, therefore, he went about his work with great industry and much caution. Colonel Osborne was at the present moment in Scotland. Bozzle was sure of that. He was quite in the north of Scotland. Bozzle had examined his map, and had found that Wick, which was the Colonel's post-town, was very far north indeed. He had half a mind to run down to Wick, as he was possessed by a certain honest zeal, which made him long to do something hard and laborious; but his experience told him that it was very easy for the Colonel to come up to the neighbourhood of St. Diddulph's, whereas the lady could not go down to Wick, unless she were to decide upon throwing herself into her lover's arms,—whereby Bozzle's work would be brought to an end. He, therefore, confined his immediate operations to St. Diddulph's.

He made acquaintance with one or two important persons in and about Mr. Outhouse's parsonage. He became very familiar with the postman. He arranged terms of intimacy, I am sorry to say, with the housemaid; and, on the third journey, he made an alliance with the potboy at the Full Moon. The potboy remembered well the fact of the child being brought to "our 'ouse," as he called the Full Moon; and he was enabled to say, that the same "gent as had brought the boy backards and forrards," had since that been

at the parsonage. But Bozzle was quite quick enough to perceive that all this had nothing to do with the Colonel. He was led, indeed, to fear that his "governor," as he was in the habit of calling Trevelyan in his half-spoken soliloquies,—that his governor was not as true to him as he was to his governor. What business had that meddling fellow Stanbury at St. Diddulph's?—for Trevelyan had not thought it necessary to tell his satellite that he had quarrelled with his friend. Bozzle was grieved in his mind when he learned that Stanbury's interference was still to be dreaded; and wrote to his governor, rather severely, to that effect; but, when so writing, he was able to give no further information. Facts, in such cases, will not unravel themselves without much patience on the part of the investigators.

CHAPTER II.

Priscilla's Wisdom.

On the night after the dinner party in the Close, Dorothy was not the only person in the house who laid awake thinking of what had taken place. Miss Stanbury also was full of anxiety, and for hour after hour could not sleep as she remembered the fruitlessness of her efforts on behalf of her nephew and niece.

It hat never occurred to her when she had first proposed to herself that Dorothy should become Mrs. Gibson that Dorothy herself would have any objection to such a step in life. Her fear had been that Dorothy would have become over-radiant with triumph at the idea of having a husband, and going to that husband with a fortune of her own. That Mr. Gibson might

hesitate, she had thought very likely. It is thus, in general, that women regard the feelings, desires, and aspirations of other women. You will hardly ever meet an elderly lady who will not speak of her juniors as living in a state of breathless anxiety to catch husbands. And the elder lady will speak of the younger as though any kind of choice in such catching was quite disregarded. The man must be a gentleman,—or, at least, gentleman-like,—and there must be bread. Let these things be given, and what girl won't jump into what man's arms? Female reader, is it not thus that the elders of your sex speak of the younger? When old Mrs. Stanbury heard that Nora Rowley had refused Mr. Glascock, the thing was to her unintelligible; and it was now quite unintelligible to Miss Stanbury that Dorothy should prefer a single life to matrimony with Mr. Gibson.

It must be acknowledged, on Aunt Stanbury's behalf, that Dorothy was one of those yielding, hesitating, submissive young women, trusting others but doubting ever of themselves, as to whom it is natural that their stronger friends should find it expedient to decide for them. Miss Stanbury was almost justified in thinking that unless she were to find a husband for her niece, her niece would never find one for herself. Dorothy would drift into being an old maid, like Priscilla, simply because she would never assert herself,—never put her best foot foremost. Aunt Stanbury had therefore taken upon herself to put out a foot; and having carefully found that Mr. Gibson was "willing," had conceived that all difficulties were over. She would be enabled to do her duty by her niece, and establish comfortably in life, at any rate, one of her brother's

children. And now Dorothy was taking upon herself to say that she did not like the gentleman! Such conduct was almost equal to writing for a penny newspaper!

On the following morning, after breakfast, when Brooke Burgess was gone out to call upon his uncle,—which he insisted upon doing openly, and not under the rose, in spite of Miss Stanbury's great gravity on the occasion,—there was a very serious conversation, and poor Dorothy had found herself to be almost silenced. She did argue for a time; but her arguments seemed, even to herself, to amount to so little! Why shouldn't she love Mr. Gibson? That was a question which she found it impossible to answer. And though she did not actually yield, though she did not say that she would accept the man, still, when she was told that three days were to be allowed to her for consideration, and that then the offer would be made to her in form, she felt that, as regarded the anti-Gibson interest, she had not a leg to stand upon. Why should not such an insignificant creature, as was she, love Mr. Gibson,—or any other man, who had bread to give her, and was in some degree like a gentleman? On that night, she wrote the following letter to her sister:—

"The Close, Tuesday.

"DEAREST PRISCILLA,

"I do so wish that you could be with me, so that I could talk to you again. Aunt Stanbury is the most affectionate and kindest friend in the world; but she has always been so able to have her own way, because she is both clever and good, that I find myself almost

like a baby with her. She has been talking to me again about Mr. Gibson; and it seems that Mr. Gibson really does mean it. It is certainly very strange; but I do think now that it is true. He is to come on Friday. It seems very odd that it should all be settled for him in that way; but then Aunt Stanbury is so clever at settling things!

"He sat next to me almost all the evening yesterday; but he didn't say anything about it, except that he hoped I agreed with him about going to church, and all that. I suppose I do; and I am quite sure that if I were to be a clergyman's wife, I should endeavour to do whatever my husband thought right about religion. One ought to try to do so, even if the clergyman is not one's husband. Mr. Burgess has come, and he was so very amusing all the evening, that perhaps that was the reason Mr. Gibson said so little. Mr. Burgess is a very nice man, and I think Aunt Stanbury is more fond of him than of anybody. He is not at all the sort of person that I expected.

"But if Mr. Gibson does come on Friday, and does really mean it, what am I to say to him? Aunt Stanbury will be very angry if I do not take her advice. I am quite sure that she intends it all for my happiness; and then, of course, she knows so much more about the world than I do. She asks me what it is that I expect. Of course, I do not expect anything. It is a great compliment from Mr. Gibson, who is a clergyman, and thought well of by everybody. And nothing could be more respectable. Aunt Stanbury says that with the money she would give us we should be quite comfortable; and she wants us to live in this house. She says that there are thirty girls round

Exeter who would give their eyes for such a chance; and, looking at it in that light, of course, it is a very great thing for me. Only think how poor we have been! And then, dear Priscilla, perhaps he would let me be good to you and dear mamma!

"But, of course, he will ask me whether I—love him; and what am I to say? Aunt Stanbury says that I am to love him. 'Begin to love him at once,' she said this morning. I would if I could, partly for her sake, and because I do feel that it would be so respectable. When I think of it, it does seem such a pity that poor I should throw away such a chance. And I must say that Mr. Gibson is very good, and most obliging; and everybody says that he has an excellent temper, and that he is a most prudent, well-dispositioned man. I declare, dear Priscilla, when I think of it, I cannot bring myself to believe that such a man should want me to be his wife.

"But what ought I to do? I suppose when a girl is in love she is very unhappy if the gentleman does not propose to her. I am sure it would not make me at all unhappy if I were told that Mr. Gibson had changed his mind.

"Dearest Priscilla, you must write at once, because he is to be here on Friday. Oh, dear; Friday does seem to be so near! And I shall never know what to say to him, either one way or the other.

"Your most affectionate sister,

"DOROTHY STANBURY.

"P.S.—Give my kindest love to mamma; but you need not tell her unless you think it best.".

Priscilla received this letter on the Wednesday morning, and felt herself bound to answer it on that same afternoon. Had she postponed her reply for a day, it would still have been in Dorothy's hands before Mr. Gibson could have come to her on the dreaded Friday morning. But still that would hardly give her time enough to consider the matter with any degree of deliberation after she should have been armed with what wisdom Priscilla might be able to send her. The post left Nuncombe Putney at three; and therefore the letter had to be written before their early dinner.

So Priscilla went into the garden and sat herself down under an old cedar that she might discuss the matter with herself in all its bearings. She felt that no woman could be called upon to write a letter that should be of more importance. The whole welfare in life of the person who was dearest to her would probably depend upon it. The weight upon her was so great that she thought for a while she would take counsel with her mother; but she felt sure that her mother would recommend the marriage; and that if she afterwards should find herself bound to oppose it, then her mother would be a miserable woman. There could be no use to her in taking counsel with her mother, because her mother's mind was known to her beforehand. The responsibility was thrown upon her, and she alone must bear it.

She tried hard to persuade herself to write at once and tell her sister to marry the man. She knew her sister's heart so well as to be sure that Dorothy would learn to love the man who was her husband. It was almost impossible that Dorothy should not love those with whom she lived. And then her sister was so well

adapted to be a wife and a mother. Her temper was so sweet, she was so pure, so unselfish, so devoted, and so healthy withal! She was so happy when she was acting for others; and so excellent in action when she had another one to think for her! She was so trusting and trustworthy that any husband would adore her! Then Priscilla walked slowly into the house, got her prayer-book, and returning to her seat under the tree, read the marriage service. It was one o'clock when she went up-stairs to write her letter, and it had not yet struck eleven when she first seated herself beneath the tree. Her letter, when written, was as follows:—

"Nuncombe Putney, August 25, 186—.

"DEAREST DOROTHY,

"I got your letter this morning, and I think it is better to answer it at once, as the time is very short. I have been thinking about it with all my mind, and I feel almost awe-stricken lest I should advise you wrongly. After all, I believe that your own dear sweet truth and honesty would guide you better than anybody else can guide you. You may be sure of this, that whichever way it is, I shall think that you have done right. Dearest sister, I suppose there can be no doubt that for most women a married life is happier than a single one. It is always thought so, as we may see by the anxiety of others to get married; and when an opinion becomes general, I think that the world is most often right. And then, my own one, I feel sure that you are adapted both for the cares and for the joys of married life. You would do your duty as a married woman happily, and would be a comfort to your husband;—not a thorn in his side, as are so many women.

"But, my pet, do not let that reasoning of Aunt Stanbury's about the thirty young girls who would give their eyes for Mr. Gibson, have any weight with you. You should not take him because thirty other young girls would be glad to have him. And do not think too much of that respectability of which you speak. I would never advise my Dolly to marry any man unless she could be respectable in her new position; but that alone should go for nothing. Nor should our poverty. We shall not starve. And even if we did, that would be but a poor excuse.

"I can find no escape from this,—that you should love him before you say that you will take him. But honest, loyal love need not, I take it, be of that romantic kind which people write about in novels and poetry. You need not think him to be perfect, or the best or grandest of men. Your heart will tell you whether he is dear to you. And remember, Dolly, that I shall remember that love itself must begin at some precise time. Though you had not learned to love him when you wrote on Tuesday, you may have begun to do so when you get this on Thursday.

"If you find that you love him, then say that you will be his wife. If your heart revolts from such a declaration as being false;—if you cannot bring yourself to feel that you prefer him to others as the partner of your life,—then tell him, with thanks for his courtesy, that it cannot be as he would have it.

"Your always and ever most affectionately,

"PRISCILLA."

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Gibson's good Fortune.

"I'LL bet you half-a-crown, my lad, you're thrown over at last, like the rest of them. There's nothing she likes so much as taking some one up in order that she may throw him over afterwards." It was thus that Mr. Bartholomew Burgess cautioned his nephew Brooke.

"I'll take care that she shan't break my heart, Uncle Barty. I will go my way and she may go hers, and she may give her money to the hospital if she pleases."

On the morning after his arrival Brooke Burgess had declared aloud in Miss Stanbury's parlour that he was going over to the bank to see his uncle. Now there was in this almost a breach of contract. Miss Stanbury, when she invited the young man to Exeter, had stipulated that there should be no intercourse between her house and the bank. "Of course, I shall not need to know where you go or where you don't go," she had written; "but after all that has passed there must not be any positive intercourse between my house and the bank." And now he had spoken of going over to C and B, as he called them, with the utmost indifference. Miss Stanbury had looked very grave, but had said nothing. She had determined to be on her guard, so that she should not be driven to quarrel with Brooke if she could avoid it.

Bartholomew Burgess was a tall, thin, ill-tempered old man, as well-known in Exeter as the cathedral, and respected after a fashion. No one liked him. He

said ill-natured things of all his neighbours, and had never earned any reputation for doing good-natured acts. But he had lived in Exeter for nearly seventy years, and had achieved that sort of esteem which comes from long tenure. And he had committed no great iniquities in the course of his fifty years of business. The bank had never stopped payment, and he had robbed no one. He had not swallowed up widows and orphans, and had done his work in the firm of Cropper and Burgess after the old-fashioned safe manner, which leads neither to riches nor to ruin. Therefore he was respected. But he was a discontented, sour old man, who believed himself to have been injured by all his own friends, who disliked his own partners because they had bought that which had, at any rate, never belonged to him;—and whose strongest passion it was to hate Miss Stanbury of the Close.

"She's got a parson by the hand now," said the uncle, as he continued his caution to the nephew.

"There was a clergyman there last night."

"No doubt, and she'll play him off against you, and you against him; and then she'll throw you both over. I know her."

"She has got a right to do what she likes with her own, Uncle Barty."

"And how did she get it? Never mind. I'm not going to set you against her, if you're her favourite for the moment. She has a niece with her there,—hasn't she?"

"One of her brother's daughters."

"They say she's going to make that clergyman marry her."

"What;—Mr. Gibson?"

"Yes. They tell me he was as good as engaged to another girl,—one of the Frenches of Heavitree. And therefore dear Jemima could do nothing better than interfere. When she has succeeded in breaking the girl's heart——"

"Which girl's heart, Uncle Barty?"

"The girl the man was to have married; when that's done she'll throw Gibson over. You'll see. She'll refuse to give the girl a shilling. She took the girl's brother by the hand ever so long, and then she threw him over. And she'll throw the girl over too, and send her back to the place she came from. And then she'll throw you over."

"According to you, she must be the most malicious old woman that ever was allowed to live!"

"I don't think there are many to beat her, as far as malice goes. But you'll find out for yourself. I shouldn't be surprised if she were to tell you before long that you were to marry the niece."

"I shouldn't think that such very hard lines either," said Brooke Burgess.

"I've no doubt you may have her if you like," said Barty, "in spite of Mr. Gibson. Only I should recommend you to take care and get the money first."

When Brooke went back to the house in the Close, Miss Stanbury was quite fussy in her silence. She would have given much to have been told something about Barty, and, above all, to have learned what Barty had said about herself. But she was far too proud even to mention the old man's name of her own accord. She was quite sure that she had been abused. She guessed, probably with tolerable accuracy, the kind of

things that had been said of her, and suggested to herself what answer Brooke would make to such accusations. But she had resolved to cloak it all in silence, and pretended for awhile not to remember the young man's declared intention when he left the house. "It seems odd to me," said Brooke, "that Uncle Barty should always live alone as he does. He must have a dreary time of it."

"I don't know anything about your Uncle Barty's manner of living."

"No;—I suppose not. You and he are not friends."

"By no means, Brooke."

"He lives there all alone in that poky bank-house, and nobody ever goes near him. I wonder whether he has any friends in the city?"

"I really cannot tell you anything about his friends. And, to tell you the truth, Brooke, I don't want to talk about your uncle. Of course, you can go to see him when you please, but I'd rather you didn't tell me of your visits afterwards."

"There is nothing in the world I hate so much as a secret," said he. He had no intention in this of animadverting upon Miss Stanbury's secret enmity, nor had he purposed to ask any question as to her relations with the old man. He had alluded to his dislike of having secrets of his own. But she misunderstood him.

"If you are anxious to know——" she said, becoming very red in the face.

"I am not at all curious to know. You quite mistake me."

"He has chosen to believe,—or to say that he believed,—that I wronged him in regard to his brother's

will. I nursed his brother when he was dying,—as I considered it to be my duty to do. I cannot tell you all that story. It is too long, and too sad. Romance is very pretty in novels, but the romance of a life is always a melancholy matter. They are most happy who have no story to tell."

"I quite believe that."

"But your Uncle Barty chose to think,—indeed, I hardly know what he thought. He said that the will was a will of my making. When it was made I and his brother were apart; we were not even on speaking terms. There had been a quarrel, and all manner of folly. I am not very proud when I look back upon it. It is not that I think myself better than others; but your Uncle Brooke's will was made before we had come together again. When he was ill it was natural that I should go to him,—after all that had passed between us. Eh, Brooke?"

"It was womanly."

"But it made no difference about the will. Mr. Bartholomew Burgess might have known that at once, and must have known it afterwards. But he has never acknowledged that he was wrong;—never even yet."

"He could not bring himself to do that, I should say."

"The will was no great triumph to me. I could have done without it. As God is my judge, I would not have lifted up my little finger to get either a part or the whole of poor Brooke's money. If I had known that a word would have done it, I would have bitten my tongue out before it should have been spoken." She had risen from her seat, and was speaking with a solemnity that almost filled her listener with awe. She

was a woman short of stature; but now, as she stood over him, she seemed to be tall and majestic. "But when the man was dead," she continued, "and the will was there,—the property was mine, and I was bound in duty to exercise the privileges and hear the responsibilities which the dead man had conferred upon me. It was Barty, then, who sent a low attorney to me, offering me a compromise. What had I to compromise? Compromise! No. If it was not mine by all the right the law could give, I would sooner have starved than have had a crust of bread out of the money." She had now clenched both her fists, and was shaking them rapidly as she stood over him, looking down upon him.

"Of course it was your own."

"Yes. Though they asked me to compromise, and sent messages to me to frighten me;—both Barty and your Uncle Tom; ay, and your father too, Brooke; they did not dare to go to law. To law, indeed! If ever there was a good will in the world, the will of your Uncle Brooke was good. They could talk, and malign me, and tell lies as to dates, and strive to make my name odious in the county; but they knew that the will was good. They did not succeed very well in what they did attempt."

"I would try to forget it all now, Aunt Stanbury."

"Forget it! How is that to be done? How can the mind forget the history of its own life? No,—I cannot forget it. I can forgive it."

"Then why not forgive it?"

"I do. I have. Why else are you here?"

"But forgive old Uncle Barty also!"

"Has he forgiven me? Come now. If I wished to forgive him, how should I begin? Would he be gracious if I went to him? Does he love me, do you think,—or hate me? Uncle Barty is a good hater. It is the best point about him. No, Brooke, we won't try the farce of a reconciliation after a long life of enmity. Nobody would believe us, and we should not believe each other."

"Then I certainly would not try."

"I do not mean to do so. The truth is, Brooke, you shall have it all when I'm gone, if you don't turn against me. You won't take to writing for penny newspapers, will you, Brooke?" As she asked the question she put one of her hands softly on his shoulder.

"I certainly shan't offend in that way."

"And you won't be a Radical?"

"No, not a Radical."

"I mean a man to follow Beales and Bright, a republican, a putter-down of the Church, a hater of the Throne. You won't take up that line, will you, Brooke?"

"It isn't my way at present, Aunt Stanbury. But a man shouldn't promise."

"Ah me! It makes me sad when I think what the country is coming to. I'm told there are scores of members of Parliament who don't pronounce their h's. When I was young, a member of Parliament used to be a gentleman;—and they've taken to ordaining all manner of people. It used to be the case that when you met a clergyman you met a gentleman. By-the-bye, Brooke, what do you think of Mr. Gibson?"

"Mr. Gibson! To tell the truth, I haven't thought much about him yet."

"But you must think about him. Perhaps you haven't thought about my niece, Dolly Stanbury?"

"I think she's an uncommonly nice girl."

"She's not to be nice for you, young man. She's to be married to Mr. Gibson."

"Are they engaged?"

"Well, no; but I intend that they shall be. You won't begrudge that I should give my little savings to one of my own name?"

"You don't know me, Aunt Stanbury, if you think that I should begrudge anything that you might do with your money."

"Dolly has been here a month or two. I think it's three months since she came, and I do like her. She's soft and womanly, and hasn't taken up those vile, filthy habits which almost all the girls have adopted. Have you seen those Frenches with the things they have on their heads?"

"I was speaking to them yesterday."

"Nasty sluts! You can see the grease on their foreheads when they try to make their hair go back in the dirty French fashion. Dolly is not like that;—is she?"

"She is not in the least like either of the Miss Frenches."

"And now I want her to become Mrs. Gibson. He is quite taken."

"Is he?"

"Oh dear, yes. Didn't you see him the other night at dinner and afterwards? Of course he knows that I can give her a little bit of money, which always goes

for something, Brooke. And I do think it would be such a nice thing for Dolly."

"And what does Dolly think about it?"

"There's the difficulty. She likes him well enough; I'm sure of that. And she has no stuck-up ideas about herself. She isn't one of those who think that almost nothing is good enough for them. But——"

"She has an objection."

"I don't know what it is. I sometimes think she is so bashful and modest she doesn't like to talk of being married,—even to an old woman like me."

"Dear me! That's not the way of the age;—is it, Aunt Stanbury?"

"It's coming to that, Brooke, that the girls will ask the men soon. Yes,—and that they won't take a refusal either. I do believe that Camilla French did ask Mr. Gibson."

"And what did Mr. Gibson say?"

"Ah;—I can't tell you that. He knows too well what he's about to take her. He's to come here on Friday at eleven, and you must be out of the way. I shall be out of the way too. But if Dolly says a word to you before that, mind you make her understand that she ought to accept Gibson."

"She's too good for him, according to my thinking."

"Don't you be a fool. How can any young woman be too good for a gentleman and a clergyman? Mr. Gibson is a gentleman. Do you know,—only you must not mention this,—that I have a kind of idea we could get Nuncombe Putney for him. My father had the living, and my brother; and I should like it to go on in the family."

No opportunity came in the way of Brooke Burgess to say anything in favour of Mr. Gibson to Dorothy Stanbury. There did come to be very quickly a sort of intimacy between her and her aunt's favourite; but she was one not prone to talk about her own affairs. And as to such an affair as this,—a question as to whether she should or should not give herself in marriage to her suitor,—she, who could not speak of it even to her own sister without a blush, who felt confused and almost confounded when receiving her aunt's admonitions and instigations on the subject, would not have endured to hear Brooke Burgess speak on the matter. Dorothy did feel that a person easier to know than Brooke had never come in her way. She had already said as much to him as she had spoken to Mr. Gibson in the three months that she had made his acquaintance. They had talked about Exeter, and about Mrs. MacHugh, and the cathedral, and Tennyson's poems, and the London theatres, and Uncle Barty, and the family quarrel. They had become quite confidential with each other on some matters. But on this heavy subject of Mr. Gibson and his proposal of marriage not a word had been said. When Brooke once mentioned Mr. Gibson on the Thursday morning, Dorothy within a minute had taken an opportunity of escaping from the room.

But circumstances did give him an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Gibson. On the Wednesday afternoon both he and Mr. Gibson were invited to drink tea at Mrs. French's house on that evening. Such invitations at Exeter were wont to be given at short dates, and both the gentlemen had said that they would go. Then Arabella French had called in the Close and had asked

Miss Stanbury and Dorothy. It was well understood by Arabella that Miss Stanbury herself would not drink tea at Heavitree. And it may be that Dorothy's company was not in truth desired. The ladies both declined. "Don't you stay at home for me, my dear," Miss Stanbury said to her niece. But Dorothy had not been out without her aunt since she had been at Exeter, and understood perfectly that it would not be wise to commence the practice at the house of the Frenches. "Mr. Brooke is coming, Miss Stanbury; and Mr. Gibson," Miss French said. And Miss Stanbury had thought that there was some triumph in her tone. "Mr. Brooke can go where he pleases, my dear," Miss Stanbury replied. "And as for Mr. Gibson, I am not his keeper." The tone in which Miss Stanbury spoke would have implied great imprudence, had not the two ladies understood each other so thoroughly, and had not each known that it was so.

There was the accustomed set of people in Mrs. French's drawing-room;—the Crumbies, and the Wrights, and the Apjohns. And Mrs. MacHugh came also,—knowing that there would be a rubber. "Their naked shoulders don't hurt me," Mrs. MacHugh said, when her friend almost scolded her for going to the house. "I'm not a young man. I don't care what they do to themselves." "You might say as much if they went naked altogether," Miss Stanbury had replied in anger. "If nobody else complained, I shouldn't," said Mrs. MacHugh. Mrs. MacHugh got her rubber; and as she had gone for her rubber, on a distinct promise that there should be a rubber, and as there was a rubber, she felt that she had no right to say illnatured things. "What does it matter to me," said Mrs. MacHugh,

"how nasty she is? She's not going to be my wife." "Ugh!" exclaimed Miss Stanbury, shaking her head both in anger and disgust.

Camilla French was by no means so bad as she was painted by Miss Stanbury, and Brooke Burgess rather liked her than otherwise. And it seemed to him that Mr. Gibson did not at all dislike Arabella, and felt no repugnance at either the lady's noddle or shoulders now that he was removed from Miss Stanbury's influence. It was clear enough also that Arabella had not given up the attempt, although she must have admitted to herself that the claims of Dorothy Stanbury were very strong. On this evening it seemed to have been specially permitted to Arabella, who was the elder sister, to take into her own hands the management of the case. Beholders of the game had hitherto declared that Mr. Gibson's safety was secured by the constant coupling of the sisters. Neither would allow the other to hunt alone. But a common sense of the common danger had made some special strategy necessary, and Camilla hardly spoke a word to Mr. Gibson during the evening. Let us hope that she found some temporary consolation in the presence of the stranger.

"I hope you are going to stay with us ever so long, Mr. Burgess?" said Camilla.

"A month. That is ever so long;—isn't it? Why I mean to see all Devonshire within that time. I feel already that I know Exeter thoroughly and everybody in it."

"I'm sure we are very much flattered."

"As for you, Miss French, I've heard so much

about you all my life, that I felt that I knew you before I came here."

"Who can have spoken to you about me?"

"You forget how many relatives I have in the city. Do you think my Uncle Barty never writes to me?"

"Not about me."

"Does he not? And do you suppose I don't hear from Miss Stanbury?"

"But she hates me. I know that."

"And do you hate her?"

"No, indeed. I've the greatest respect for her. But she is a little odd; isn't she, now, Mr. Burgess? We all like her ever so much; and we've known her ever so long, six or seven years,—since we were quite young things. But she has such queer notions about girls."

"What sort of notions?"

"She'd like them all to dress just like herself; and she thinks that they should never talk to young men. If she was here she'd say I was flirting with you, because we're sitting together."

"But you are not; are you?"

"Of course I am not."

"I wish you would," said Brooke.

"I shouldn't know how to begin. I shouldn't, indeed. I don't know what flirting means, and I don't know who does know. When young ladies and gentlemen go out, I suppose they are intended to talk to each other."

"But very often they don't, you know."

"I call that stupid," said Camilla. "And yet, when they do, all the old maids say that the girls are

flirting. I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Burgess. I don't care what any old maid says about me. I always talk to people that I like, and if they choose to call me a flirt, they may. It's my opinion that still waters run the deepest."

"No doubt the noisy streams are very shallow," said Brooke.

"You may call me a shallow stream if you like, Mr. Burgess."

"I meant nothing of the kind."

"But what do you call Dorothy Stanbury? That's what I call still water. She runs deep enough."

"The quietest young lady I ever saw in my life."

"Exactly. So quiet, but so—clever. What do you think of Mr. Gibson?"

"Everybody is asking me what I think of Mr. Gibson."

"You know what they say. They say he is to marry Dorothy Stanbury. Poor man! I don't think his own consent has ever been asked yet;—but, nevertheless, it's settled."

"Just at present he seems to me to be,—what shall I say?—I oughtn't to say flirting with your sister; ought I?"

"Miss Stanbury would say so if she were here, no doubt. But the fact is, Mr. Burgess, we've known him almost since we were infants, and of course we take an interest in his welfare. There has never been anything more than that. Arabella is nothing more to him than I am. Once, indeed—; but, however—; that does not signify. It would be nothing to us, if he really liked Dorothy Stanbury. But as far as we

can see,—and we do see a good deal of him,—there is no such feeling on his part. Of course we haven't asked. We should not think of such a thing. Mr. Gibson may do just as he likes for us. But I am not quite sure that Dorothy Stanbury is just the girl that would make him a good wife. Of course when you've known a person seven or eight years you do get anxious abouut his happiness. Do you know, we think her,—perhaps a little,—sly."

In the meantime, Mr. Gibson was completely subject to the individual charms of Arabella. Camilla had been quite correct in a part of her description of their intimacy. She and her sister had known Mr. Gibson for seven or eight years; but nevertheless the intimacy could not with truth be said to have commenced during the infancy of the young ladies, even if the word were used in its legal sense. Seven or eight years, however, is a long acquaintance; and there was, perhaps, something of a real grievance in this Stanbury intervention. If it be a recognised fact in society that young ladies are in want of husbands, and that an effort on their part towards matrimony is not altogether impossible, it must be recognised also that failure will be disagreeable, and interference regarded with animosity. Miss Stanbury the elder was undoubtedly interfering between Mr. Gibson and the Frenches; and it is neither manly nor womanly to submit to interference with one's dearest prospects. It may, perhaps, be admitted that the Miss Frenches had shown too much open ardour in their pursuit of Mr. Gibson. Perhaps there should have been no ardour and no pursuit. It may be that the theory of womanhood is right which forbids to women any such at-

tempts,—which teaches them that they must ever be the pursued, never the pursuers. As to that there shall be no discourse at present. But it must be granted that whenever the pursuit has been attempted, it is not in human nature to abandon it without an effort. That the French girls should be very angry with Miss Stanbury, that they should put their heads together with the intention of thwarting her, that they should think evil things of poor Dorothy, that they should half despise Mr. Gibson, and yet resolve to keep their hold upon him as a chattel and a thing of value that was almost their own, was not perhaps much to their discredit.

"You are a good deal at the house in the Close now," said Arabella, in her lowest voice,—in a voice so low that it was almost melancholy.

"Well; yes. Miss Stanbury, you know, has always been a staunch friend of mine. And she takes an interest in my little church." People say that girls are sly; but men can be sly, too, sometimes.

"It seems that she has taken you so much away from us, Mr. Gibson."

"I don't know why you should say that, Miss French."

"Perhaps I am wrong. One is apt to be sensitive about one's friends. We seem to have known you so well. There is nobody else in Exeter that mamma regards as she does you. But, of course, if you are happy with Miss Stanbury that is every thing."

"I am speaking of the old lady," said Mr. Gibson, who, in spite of his slyness, was here thrown a little off his guard.

"And I am speaking of the old lady too," said Arabella. "Of whom else should I be speaking?"

"No;—of course not."

"Of course," continued Arabella, "I hear what people say about the niece. One cannot help what one hears, you know, Mr. Gibson; but I don't believe that, I can assure you." As she said this, she looked into his face, as though waiting for an answer; but Mr. Gibson had no answer ready. Then Arabella told herself that if anything was to be done it must be done at once. What use was there in beating round the bush, when the only chance of getting the game was to be had by dashing at once into the thicket. "I own I should be glad," she said, turning her eyes away from him, "if I could hear from your own mouth that it is not true."

Mr. Gibson's position was one not to be envied. Were he willing to tell the very secrets of his soul to Miss French with the utmost candour, he could not answer her question either one way or the other, and he was not willing to tell her any of his secrets. It was certainly the fact, too, that there had been tender passages between him and Arabella. Now, when there have been such passages, and the gentleman is cross-examined by the lady, as Mr. Gibson was being cross-examined at the present moment,—the gentleman usually teaches himself to think that a little falsehood is permissible. A gentleman can hardly tell a lady that he has become tired of her, and has changed his mind. He feels the matter, perhaps, more keenly even than she does; and though, at all other times he may be a very Paladin in the cause of truth, in such strait as this he does allow himself some latitude.

"You are only joking, of course," he said.

"Indeed, I am not joking. I can assure you, Mr. Gibson, that the welfare of the friends whom I really love can never be a matter of joke to me. Mrs. Crumbie says that you positively are engaged to marry Dorothy Stanbury."

"What does Mrs. Crumbie know about it?"

"I dare say nothing. It is not so;—is it?"

"Certainly not."

"And there is nothing in it;—is there?"

"I wonder why people make these reports," said Mr. Gibson, prevaricating.

"It is a fabrication from beginning to end, then?" said Arabella, pressing the matter quite home. At this time she was very close to him, and though her words were severe, the glance from her eyes was soft. And the scent from her hair was not objectionable to him as it would have been to Miss Stanbury. And the mode of her head-dress was not displeasing to him. And the folds of her dress, as they fell across his knee, were welcome to his feelings. He knew that he was as one under temptation, but he was not strong enough to bid the tempter avaunt. "Say that it is so, Mr. Gibson!"

"Of course, it is not so," said Mr. Gibson—lying.

"I am so glad. For, of course, Mr. Gibson, when we heard it we thought a great deal about it. A man's happiness depends so much on whom he marries;—doesn't it? And a clergyman's more than anybody else's. And we didn't think she was quite the sort of woman that you would like. You see, she has had no advantages, poor thing! She has been shut up in a little country cottage all her life;—just a labourer's

hovel, no more;—and though it wasn't her fault, of course, and we all pitied her, and were so glad when Miss Stanbury brought her to the Close;—still, you know, though one was very glad of her as an acquaintance, yet, you know, as a wife,—and for such a dear, dear friend——" She went on, and said many other things with equal enthusiasm, and then wiped her eyes, and then smiled and laughed. After that she declared that she was quite happy,—so happy; and so she left him. The poor man, after the falsehood had been extracted from him, said nothing more; but sat, in patience, listening to the raptures and enthusiasm of his friend. He knew that he had disgraced himself; and he knew also that his disgrace would be known, if Dorothry Stanbury should accept his offer on the morrow. And yet how hardly he had been used! What answer could be have given compatible both with the truth and with his own personal dignity?

About half an hour afterwards, he was walking back to Exeter with Brooke Burgess, and then Brooke did ask him a question or two.

"Nice girls those Frenches, I think," said Brooke.

"Very nice," said Mr. Gibson.

"How Miss Stanbury does hate them," says Brooke.

"Not hate them, I hope," said Mr. Gibson.

"She doesn't love them;—does she?"

"Well, as for love;—yes; in one sense,—I hope she does. Miss Stanbury, you know, is a woman who expresses herself strongly."

"What would she say, if she were told that you and I were going to marry those two girls? We are both favourites, you know."

"Dear me! What a very odd supposition," said Mr. Gibson.

"For my part, I don't think I shall," said Brooke.

"I don't suppose I shall either," said Mr. Gibson, with a gravity which was intended to convey some smattering of rebuke.

"A fellow might do worse, you know," said Brooke. "For my part, I rather like girls with chignons, and all that sort of get-up. But the worst of it is, one can't marry two at a time."

"That would be bigamy," said Mr. Gibson.

"Just so," said Brooke.

CHAPTER IV.

Miss Stanbury's Wrath.

PUNCTUALLY at eleven o'clock on the Friday morning Mr. Gibson knocked at the door of the house in the Close. The reader must not imagine that he had ever wavered in his intention with regard to Dorothy Stanbury, because he had been driven into a corner by the pertinacious ingenuity of Miss French. He never for a moment thought of being false to Miss Stanbury the elder. Falseness of that nature would have been ruinous to him,—would have made him a marked man in the city all his days, and would probably have reached even to the bishop's ears. He was neither bad enough, nor audacious enough, nor foolish enough, for such perjury as that. And, moreover, though the wiles of Arabella had been potent with him, he very much preferred Dorothy Stanbury. Seven years of flirtation with a young lady is more trying to the affection than any duration of matrimony. Arabella had managed

to awaken something of the old glow, but Mr. Gibson, as soon as he was alone, turned from her mentally in disgust. No! Whatever little trouble there might be in his way, it was clearly his duty to marry Dorothy Stanbury. She had the sweetest temper in the world, and blushed with the prettiest blush! She would have, moreover, two thousand pounds on the day she married, and there was no saying what other and greater pecuniary advantages might follow. His mind was quite made up; and during the whole morning he had been endeavouring to drive all disagreeable reminiscences of Miss French from his memory, and to arrange the words with which he would make his offer to Dorothy. He was aware that he need not be very particular about his words, as Dorothy, from the bashfulness of her nature, would be no judge of eloquence at such a time. But still, for his own sake, there should be some form of expression, some propriety of diction. Before eleven o'clock he had it all by heart, and had nearly freed himself from the uneasiness of his falsehood to Arabella. He had given much serious thought to the matter, and had quite resolved that he was right in his purpose, and that he could marry Dorothy with a pure conscience, and with a true promise of a husband's love. "Dear Dolly!" he said to himself, with something of enthusiasm as he walked across the Close. And he looked up to the house as he came to it. There was to his future home. There was not one of the prebends who had a better house. And there was a dovelike softness about Dorothy's eyes, and a winning obedience in her manner, that were charming. His lines had fallen to him in very pleasant places. Yes;—he would go up to her and take her at once by

one gets for going out of one's way. I did think she'd be so happy, Mr. Gibson, living here as your wife. She and I between us could have managed for you so nicely."

Mr. Gibson was silent for a minute or two, during which he walked up and down the room,—contemplating, no doubt, the picture of married life which Miss Stanbury had painted for him,—a picture which, as it seemed, was not to be realised. "And what had I better do, Miss Stanbury?" he asked at last.

"Do! I don't know what you're to do. I'm groom enough to bring a mare to water, but I can't make her drink."

"Will waiting be any good?"

"How can I say? I'll tell you one thing not to do. Don't go and philander with those girls at Heavitree. It's my belief that Dorothy has been thinking of them. People talk to her, of course."

"I wish people would hold their tongues. People are so indiscreet. People don't know how much harm they may do."

"You've given them some excuse, you know, Mr. Gibson."

This was very ill-natured, and was felt by Mr. Gibson to be so rude, that he almost turned upon his patroness in anger. He had known Dolly for not more than three months, and had devoted himself to her, to the great anger of his older friends. He had come this morning true to his appointment, expecting that others would keep their promises to him, as he was ready to keep those which he had made;—and now he was told that it was his fault! "I do think that's rather hard, Miss Stanbury," he said.

"So you have," said she;—"nasty, slatternly girls, without an idea inside their noddles. But it's no use your scolding me."

"I didn't mean to scold, Miss Stanbury."

"I've done all that I could."

"And you think she won't see me for a minute?"

"She says she won't. I can't bid Martha carry her down."

"Then, perhaps, I had better leave you for the present," said Mr. Gibson, after another pause. So he went, a melancholy, blighted man. Leaving the Close, he passed through into Southernhay, and walked across by the new streets towards the Heavitree road. He had no design in taking this route, but he went on till he came in sight of the house in which Mrs. French lived. As he walked slowly by it, he looked up at the windows, and something of a feeling of romance came across his heart. Were his young affections buried there, or were they not? And, if so, with which of those fair girls were they buried? For the last two years, up to last night, Camilla had certainly been in the ascendant. But Arabella was a sweet young woman; and there had been a time,—when those tender passages were going on,—in which he had thought that no young woman ever was so sweet. A period of romance, an era of enthusiasm, a short-lived, delicious holiday of hot-tongued insanity had been permitted to him in his youth;—but all that was now over. And yet here he was, with three strings to his bow,—so he told himself,—and he had not as yet settled for himself the great business of matrimony. He was inclined to think, as he walked on, that he would walk his life alone, an active, useful, but a

melancholy man. After such experiences as his, how should he ever again speak of his heart to a woman? During this walk, his mind recurred frequently to Dorothy Stanbury; and, doubtless, he thought that he had often spoken of his heart to her. He was back at his lodgings before three, at which hour he ate an early dinner, and then took the afternoon cathedral service at four. The evening he spent at home, thinking of the romance of his early days. What would Miss Stanbury have said, had she seen him in his easy chair behind the "Exeter Argus,"—with a pipe in his mouth?

In the meantime, there was an uncomfortable scene in progress between Dorothy and her aunt. Brooke Burgess, as desired, had left the house before eleven, having taken upon himself, when consulted, to say in the mildest terms, that he thought that, in general, young women should not be asked to marry if they did not like to;—which opinion had been so galling to Miss Stanbury that she had declared that he had so scolded her, that she did not know whether she was standing on her head or her heels. As soon as Mr. Gibson left her, she sat herself down, and fairly cried. She had ardently desired this thing, and had allowed herself to think of her desire as of one that would certainly be accomplished. Dorothy would have been so happy as the wife of a clergyman! Miss Stanbury's standard for men and women was not high. She did not expect others to be as self-sacrificing, as charitable, and as good as herself. It was not that she gave to herself credit for such virtues; but she thought of herself as one who, from the peculiar circumstances of life, was bound to do much for others. There was no end

to her doing good for others,—if only the others would allow themselves to be governed by her. She did not think that Mr. Gibson was a great divine; but she perceived that he was a clergyman, living decently,—of that secret pipe Miss Stanbury knew nothing,—doing his duty punctually, and, as she thought, very much in want of a wife. Then there was her niece, Dolly, —soft, pretty, feminine, without a shilling, and much in want of some one to comfort and take care of her. What could be better than such a marriage! And the overthrow to the girls with the big chignons would be so complete! She had set her mind upon it, and now Dorothy said that it couldn't, and it wouldn't, and it shouldn't be accomplished! She was to be thrown over by this chit of a girl, as she had been thrown over by the girl's brother! And, when she complained, the girl simply offered to go away!

At about twelve Dorothy came creeping down into the room in which her aunt was sitting, and pretended to occupy herself on some piece of work. For a considerable time,—for three minutes perhaps,—Miss Stanbury did not speak. She had resolved that she would not speak to her niece again,—at least, not for that day. She would let the ungrateful girl know how miserable she had been made. But at the close of the three minutes her patience was exhausted. "What are you doing there?" she said.

"I am quilting your cap, Aunt Stanbury."

"Put it down. You shan't do anything for me. I won't have you touch my things any more. I don't like pretended service."

"It is not pretended, Aunt Stanbury."

"I say it is pretended. Why did you pretend to

me that you would have him when you had made up your mind against it all the time?"

"But I hadn't—made up my mind."

"If you had so much doubt about it, you might have done what I wanted you."

"I couldn't, Aunt Stanbury."

"You mean you wouldn't. I wonder what it is you do expect."

"I don't expect anything, Aunt Stanbury."

"No; and I don't expect anything. What an old fool I am ever to look for any comfort. Why should I think that anybody would care for me?"

"Indeed, I do care for you."

"In what sort of way do you show it? You're just like your brother Hugh. I've disgraced myself to that man,—promising what I could not perform. I declare it makes me sick when I think of it. Why did you not tell me at once?" Dorothy said nothing further, but sat with the cap on her lap. She did not dare to resume her needle, and she did not like to put the cap aside, as by doing so it would seem as though she had accepted her aunt's prohibition against her work. For half an hour she sat thus, during which time Miss Stanbury dropped asleep. She woke with a start, and began to scold again. "What's the good of sitting there all the day, with your hands before you, doing nothing?"

But Dorothy had been very busy. She had been making up her mind, and had determined to communicate her resolution to her aunt. "Dear aunt," she said, "I've been thinking of something."

"It's too late now," said Miss Stanbury.

"I see I've made you very unhappy."

"Of course you have."

"And you think that I'm ungrateful. I'm not ungrateful, and I don't think that Hugh is."

"Never mind Hugh."

"Only because it seems so hard that you should take so much trouble about us, and that then there should be so much vexation."

"I find it very hard."

"So I think that I'd better go back to Nuncombe."

"That's what you call gratitude."

"I don't like to stay here and make you unhappy. I can't think that I ought to have done what you asked me, because I did not feel at all in that way about Mr. Gibson. But as I have only disappointed you, it will be better that I should go home. I have been very happy here,—very."

"Bother!" exclaimed Miss Stanbury.

"I have,—and I do love you, though you won't believe it. But I am sure I oughtn't to remain to make you unhappy. I shall never forget all that you have done for me; and though you call me ungrateful, I am not. But I know that I ought not to stay, as I cannot do what you wish. So, if you please, I will go back to Nuncombe."

"You'll not do anything of the kind," said Miss Stanbury.

"But it will be better."

"Yes, of course; no doubt. I suppose you're tired of us all."

"It is not that I'm tired, Aunt Stanbury. It isn't that at all." Dorothy had now become red up to the roots of her hair, and her eyes were full of tears. "But I cannot stay where people think that I am un-

grateful. If you please, Aunt Stanbury, I will go." Then, of course, there was a compromise. Dorothy did at last consent to remain in the Close, but only on condition that she should be forgiven for her sin in reference to Mr. Gibson, and be permitted to go on with her aunt's cap.

CHAPTER V.

Mont Cenis.

THE night had been fine and warm, and it was now noon on a fine September day when the train from Paris reached St. Michael, on the route to Italy by Mont Cenis,—as all the world knows St. Michael is, or was a year or two back, the end of railway travelling in that direction. At the time Mr. Fell's grand project of carrying a line of rails over the top of the mountain was only in preparation, and the journey from St. Michael to Susa was still made by the diligences,—those dear old continental coaches which are now nearly as extinct as our own, but which did not deserve death so fully as did our abominable vehicles. The coupé of a diligence, or, better still, the banquette, was a luxurious mode of travelling as compared with anything that our coaches offered. There used indeed to be a certain halo of glory round the occupant of the box of a mail-coach. The man who had secured that seat was supposed to know something about the world, and to be such a one that the passengers sitting behind him would be proud to be allowed to talk to him. But the prestige of the position was greater than the comfort. A night on the box of a mail-coach was but a bad time, and a night inside a mail-coach was a night

in purgatory. Whereas a seat up above, on the banquette of a diligence passing over the Alps, with room for the feet, and support for the back, with plenty of rugs and plenty of tobacco, used to be on the Mont Cenis, and still is on some other mountain passes, a very comfortable mode of seeing a mountain route. For those desirous of occupying the coupé, or the three front seats of the body of the vehicle, it must be admitted that difficulties frequently arose; and that such difficulties were very common at St. Michael. There would be two or three of those enormous vehicles preparing to start for the mountain, whereas it would appear that twelve or fifteen passengers had come down from Paris armed with tickets assuring them that this preferable mode of travelling should be theirs. And then assertions would be made, somewhat recklessly, by the officials, to the effect that all the diligence was coupé. It would generally be the case that some middle-aged Englishman who could not speak French would go to the wall, together with his wife. Middle-aged Englishmen with their wives, who can't speak French, can nevertheless be very angry, and threaten loudly, when they suppose themselves to be ill-treated. A middle-aged Englishman, though he can't speak a word of French, won't believe a French official who tells him that the diligence is all coupé, when he finds himself with his unfortunate partner in a round-about place behind with two priests, a dirty man who looks like a brigand, a sick maid-servant, and three agricultural labourers. The attempt, however, was frequently made, and thus there used to be occasionally a little noise round the bureau at St. Michael.

On the morning of which we are speaking, two

Englishmen had just made good their claim, each independently of the other, each without having heard or seen the other, when two American ladies, coming up very tardily, endeavoured to prove their rights. The ladies were without other companions, and were not fluent with their French, but were clearly entitled to their seats. They were told that the conveyance was all coupé, but perversely would not believe the statement. The official shrugged his shoulders and signified that his ultimatum had been pronounced. What can an official do in such circumstances, when more coupé passengers are sent to him than the coupés at his command will hold? "But we have paid for the coupé," said the elder American lady, with considerable indignation, though her French was imperfect;—for American ladies understand their rights. "Bah; yes; you have paid and you shall go. What would you have?" "We would have what we have paid for," said the American lady. Then the official rose from his stool and shrugged his shoulders again, and made a motion with both his hands, intended to shew that the thing was finished. "It is a robbery," said the elder American lady to the younger. "I should not mind, only you are so unwell." "It will not kill me, I dare say," said the younger. Then one of the English gentlemen declared that his place was very much at the service of the invalid,—and the other Englishman declared that his also was at the service of the invalid's companion. Then, and not till then, the two men recognised each other. One was Mr. Glascock, on his way to Naples, and the other was Mr. Trevelyan, on his way,—he knew not whither.

Upon this, of course, they spoke to each other. In

London they had been well acquainted, each having been an intimate guest at the house of old Lady Milborough. And each knew something of the other's recent history. Mr. Glascock was aware, as was all the world, that Trevelyan had quarrelled with his wife; and Trevelyan was aware that Mr. Glascock had been spoken of as a suitor to his own sister-in-law. Of that visit which Mr. Glascock had made to Nuncombe Putney, and of the manner in which Nora had behaved to her lover, Trevelyan knew nothing. Their greetings spoken, their first topic of conversation was, of course, the injury proposed to be done to the American ladies, and which would now fall upon them. They went into the waiting-room together, and during such toilet as they could make there, grumbled furiously. They would take post horses over the mountain, not from any love of solitary grandeur, but in order that they might make the company pay for its iniquity. But it was soon apparent to them that they themselves had no ground of complaint, and as everybody was very civil, and as a seat in the banquette over the heads of the American ladies was provided for them, and as the man from the bureau came and apologised, they consented to be pacified, and ended, of course, by tipping half-a-dozen of the servants about the yard. Mr. Glascock had a man of his own with him, who was very nearly being put on to the same seat with his master as an extra civility; but this inconvenience was at last avoided. Having settled these little difficulties, they went into breakfast in the buffet.

There could be no better breakfast than used to be given in the buffet at the railway terminus at St. Michael. The company might occasionally be led into

errors about that question of coupé seats, but in reference to their provisions, they set an example which might be of great use to us here in England. It is probably the case that breakfasts for travellers are not so frequently needed here as they are on the Continent; but, still, there is often to be found a crowd of people ready to eat if only the wherewithal were there. We are often told in our newspapers that England is disgraced by this and by that; by the unreadiness of our army, by the unfitness of our navy, by the irrationality of our laws, by the immobility of our prejudices, and what not; but the real disgrace of England is the railway sandwich,—that whited sepulchre, fair enough outside, but so meagre, poor, and spiritless within, such a thing of shreds and parings, such a dab of food, telling us that the poor bone whence it was scraped had been made utterly bare before it was sent into the kitchen for the soup pot. In France one does get food at the railway stations, and at St. Michael the breakfast was unexceptional.

Our two friends seated themselves near to the American ladies, and were, of course, thanked for their politeness. American women are taught by the habits of their country to think that men should give way to them more absolutely than is in accordance with the practices of life in Europe. A seat in a public conveyance in the States, when merely occupied by a man, used to be regarded by any woman as being at her service as completely as though it were vacant. One woman indicating a place to another would point with equal freedom to a man or a space. It is said that this is a little altered now, and that European views on this subject are spreading themselves. Our

two ladies, however, who were pretty, clever-looking, and attractive even after the night's journey, were manifestly more impressed with the villainy of the French officials than they were with the kindness of their English neighbours.

"And nothing can be done to punish them?" said the younger of them to Mr. Glascock.

"Nothing, I should think," said he. "Nothing will, at any rate."

"And you will not get back your money?" said the elder,—who, though the elder, was probably not much above twenty.

"Well;—no. Time is money, they say. It would take thrice the value of the time in money, and then one would probably fail. They have done very well for us, and I suppose there are difficulties."

"It couldn't have taken place in our country," said the younger lady. "All the same, we are very much obliged to you. It would not have been nice for us to have to go up into the banquette."

"They would have put you into the interior."

"And that would have been worse. I hate being put anywhere,—as if I were a sheep. It seems so odd to us, that you here should be all so tame."

"Do you mean the English, or the French, or the world in general on this side of the Atlantic?"

"We mean Europeans," said the younger lady, who was better after her breakfast. "But then we think that the French have something of compensation, in their manners, and their ways of life, their climate, the beauty of their cities, and their general management of things."

"They are very great in many ways, no doubt," said Mr. Glascock.

"They do understand living better than you do," said the elder.

"Everything is so much brighter with them," said the younger.

"They contrive to give a grace to every-day existence," said the elder.

"There is such a welcome among them for strangers," said the younger.

"Particularly in reference to places taken in the coupé," said Trevelyan, who had hardly spoken before.

"Ah, that is an affair of honesty," said the elder. "If we want honesty, I believe we must go back to the stars and stripes."

Mr. Glascock looked up from his plate almost aghast. He said nothing, however, but called for the waiter, and paid for his breakfast. Nevertheless, there was a considerable amount of travelling friendship engendered between the ladies and our two friends before the diligence had left the railway yard. They were two Miss Spaldings, going on to Florence, at which place they had an uncle, who was minister from the States to the kingdom of Italy; and they were not at all unwilling to receive such little civilities as gentlemen can give to ladies when travelling. The whole party intended to sleep at Turin that night, and they were altogether on good terms with each other when they started on the journey from St. Michael.

"Clever women those," said Mr. Glascock, as soon as they had arranged their legs and arms in the banquette.

"Yes, indeed."

"American women always are clever,—and are almost always pretty."

"I do not like them," said Trevelyan,—who in these days was in a mood to like nothing. "They are exigeant;—and then they are so hard. They want the weakness that a woman ought to have."

"That comes from what they would call your insular prejudice. We are accustomed to less self-assertion on the part of women than is customary with them. We prefer women to rule us by seeming to yield. In the States, as I take it, the women never yield, and the men have to fight their own battles with other tactics."

"I don't know what their tactics are."

"They keep their distance. The men live much by themselves, as though they knew they would not have a chance in the presence of their wives and daughters. Nevertheless they don't manage these things badly. You very rarely hear of an American being separated from his wife."

The words were no sooner out of his mouth, than Mr. Glascock knew, and remembered, and felt what he had said. There are occasions in which a man sins so deeply against fitness and the circumstances of the hour, that it becomes impossible for him to slur over his sin as though it had not been committed. There are certain little peccadilloes in society which one can manage to throw behind one,—perhaps with some difficulty, and awkwardness; but still they are put aside, and conversation goes on, though with a hitch. But there are graver offences, the gravity of which strikes the offender so seriously that it becomes impossible for him to seem even to ignore his own iniquity. Ashes must

be eaten publicly, and sackcloth worn before the eyes of men. It was so now with poor Mr. Glascock. He thought about it for a moment,—whether or no it was possible that he should continue his remarks about the American ladies, without betraying his own consciousness of the thing that he had done; and he found that it was quite impossible. He knew that he was red up to his hairs, and hot, and that his blood tingled. His blushes, indeed, would not be seen in the seclusion of the banquette; but he could not overcome the heat and the tingling. There was silence for about three minutes, and then he felt that it would be best for him to confess his own fault. "Trevelyan," he said, "I am very sorry for the allusion that I made. I ought to have been less awkward, and I beg your pardon."

"It does not matter," said Trevelyan. "Of course I know that everybody is talking of it behind my back. I am not to expect that people will be silent because I am unhappy."

"Nevertheless I beg your pardon," said the other.

There was but little further conversation between them till they reached Lanslebourg, at the foot of the mountain, at which place they occupied themselves with getting coffee for the two American ladies. The Miss Spaldings took their coffee almost with as much grace as though it had been handed to them by Frenchmen. And indeed they were very gracious,—as is the nature of American ladies in spite of that hardness of which Trevelyan had complained. They assume an intimacy readily, with no appearance of impropriety, and are at their ease easily. When, therefore, they were handed out of their carriage by Mr. Glascock, the bystanders at Lanslebourg might have thought that the

whole party had been travelling together from New York. "What should we have done if you hadn't taken pity on us?" said the elder lady. "I don't think we could have climbed up into that high place; and look at the crowd that have come out of the interior. A man has some advantages after all."

"I am quite in the dark as to what they are," said Mr. Glascock.

"He can give up his place to a lady, and can climb up into a banquette."

"And he can be a member of Congress," said the younger. "I'd sooner be senator from Massachusetts than be the Queen of England."

"So would I," said Mr. Glascock. "I'm glad we can agree about one thing."

The two gentlemen agreed to walk up the mountain together, and with some trouble induced the conductor to permit them to do so. Why conductors of diligences should object to such relief to their horses the ordinary Englishman can hardly understand. But in truth they feel so deeply the responsibility which attaches itself to their shepherding of their sheep, that they are always fearing lest some poor lamb should go astray on the mountain side. And though the road be broad and very plainly marked, the conductor never feels secure that his passenger will find his way safely to the summit. He likes to know that each of his flock is in his right place, and disapproves altogether of an erratic spirit. But Mr. Glascock at last prevailed, and the two men started together up the mountain. When the permission has been once obtained the walker may be sure that his guide and shepherd will not desert him.

"Of course I know," said Trevelyan, when the

third twist up the mountain had been overcome, "that people talk about me and my wife. It is a part of the punishment for the mistake that one makes."

"It is a sad affair altogether."

"The saddest in the world. Lady Milborough has no doubt spoken to you about it."

"Well;—yes; she has."

"How could she help it? I am not such a fool as to suppose that people are to hold their tongues about me more than they do about others. Intimate as she is with you, of course she has spoken to you."

"I was in hopes that something might have been done by this time."

"Nothing has been done. Sometimes I think I shall put an end to myself, it makes me so wretched."

"Then why don't you agree to forget and forgive and have done with it?"

"That is so easily said;—so easily said." After this they walked on in silence for a considerable distance. Mr. Glascock was not anxious to talk about Trevelyan's wife, but he did wish to ask a question or two about Mrs. Trevelyan's sister, if only this could be done without telling too much of his own secret. "There's nothing I think so grand, as walking up a mountain," he said after a while.

"It's all very well," said Trevelyan, in a tone which seemed to imply that to him in his present miserable condition all recreations, exercises, and occupations were mere leather and prunella.

"I don't mean, you know, in the Alpine Club way," said Glascock. "I'm too old and too stiff for that. But when the path is good, and the air not too cold, and when it is neither snowing, nor thawing, nor raining,

and when the sun isn't hot, and you've got plenty of time, and know that you can stop any moment you like and be pushed up by a carriage, I do think walking up a mountain is very fine,—if you've got proper shoes, and a good stick, and it isn't too soon after dinner. There's nothing like the air of Alps." And Mr. Glascock renewed his pace, and stretched himself against the hill at the rate of three miles an hour.

"I used to be very fond of Switzerland," said Trevelyan, "but I don't care about it now. My eye has lost all its taste."

"It isn't the eye," said Glascock.

"Well; no. The truth is that when one is absolutely unhappy one cannot revel in the imagination. I don't believe in the miseries of poets."

"I think myself," said Glascock, "that a poet should have a good digestion. By-the-bye, Mrs. Trevelyan and her sister went down to Nuncombe Putney, in Devonshire."

"They did go there."

"Have they moved since? A very pretty place is Nuncombe Putney."

"You have been there, then?"

Mr. Glascock blushed again. He was certainly an awkward man, saying things that he ought not to say, and telling secrets which ought not to have been told. "Well;—yes. I have been there,—as it happens."

"Just lately do you mean?"

Mr. Glascock paused, hoping to find his way out of the scrape, but soon perceived that there was no way out. He could not lie, even in an affair of love, and was altogether destitute of those honest subterfuges, —subterfuges honest in such position,—of which a

dozen would have been at once at the command of any woman, and with one of which, sufficient for the moment, most men would have been able to arm themselves. "Indeed, yes," he said, almost stammering as he spoke. "It was lately;—since your wife went there." Trevelyan, though he had been told of the possibility of Mr. Glascock's courtship, felt himself almost aggrieved by this man's intrusion on his wife's retreat. Had he not sent her there that she might be private; and what right had any one to invade such privacy? "I suppose I had better tell the truth at once," said Mr. Glascock. "I went to see Miss Rowley."

"Oh, indeed."

"My secret will be safe with you, I know."

"I did not know that there was a secret," said Trevelyan. "I should have thought that they would have told me."

"I don't see that. However, it doesn't matter much. I got nothing by my journey. Are the ladies still at Nuncombe Putney?"

"No, they have moved from there to London."

"Not back to Curzon Street?"

"Oh dear, no. There is no house in Curzon Street for them now." This was said in a tone so sad that it almost made Mr. Glascock weep. "They are staying with an aunt of theirs,—out to the east of the city."

"At St. Diddulph's?"

"Yes;—with Mr. Outhouse, the clergyman there. You can't conceive what it is not to be able to see your own child; and yet, how can I take the boy from her?"

"Of course not. He's only a baby."

"And yet all this is brought on me solely by her obstinacy. God knows, however, I don't want to say a word against her. People choose to say that I am to blame, and they may say so for me. Nothing that any one may say can add anything to the weight that I have to bear." Then they walked to the top of the mountain in silence, and in due time were picked up by their proper shepherd and carried down to Susa at a pace that would give an English coachman a concussion of the brain.

Why passengers for Turin, who reach Susa dusty, tired, and sleepy, should be detained at that place for an hour and a half instead of being forwarded to their beds in the great city, is never made very apparent. All travelling officials on the continent of Europe are very slow in their manipulation of luggage; but as they are equally correct we will find the excuse for their tardiness in the latter quality. The hour and a half, however, is a necessity, and it is very grievous. On this occasion the two Miss Spaldings ate their supper, and the two gentlemen waited on them. The ladies had learned to regard at any rate Mr. Glascock as their own property, and received his services, graciously indeed, but quite as a matter of course. When he was sent from their peculiar corner of the big, dirty refreshment room to the supper-table to fetch an apple, and then desired to change it because the one which he had brought was spotted, he rather liked it. And when he sat down with his knees near to theirs, actually trying to eat a large Italian apple himself simply because they had eaten one, and discussed with them the passage over the Mont Cenis, he began to think that Susa was, after all, a place in which an

hour and a half might be whiled away without much cause for complaint.

"We only stay one night at Turin," said Caroline Spalding, the elder.

"And we shall have to start at ten,—to get through to Florence to-morrow," said Olivia, the younger. "Isn't it cruel, wasting all this time when we might be in bed?"

"It is not for me to complain of the cruelty," said Mr. Glascock.

"We should have fared infinitely worse if we hadn't met you," said Caroline Spalding.

"But our republican simplicity won't allow us to assert that even your society is better than going to bed, after a journey of thirty hours," said Olivia.

In the meantime Trevelyan was roaming about the station moodily by himself, and the place is one not apt to restore cheerfulness to a moody man by any resources of its own. When the time for departure came Mr. Glascock sought him and found him; but Trevelyan had chosen a corner for himself in a carriage, and declared that he would rather avoid the ladies for the present. "Don't think me uncivil to leave you," he said, "but the truth is, I don't like American ladies."

"I do rather," said Mr. Glascock.

"You can say that I've got a headache," said Trevelyan. So Mr. Glascock returned to his friends, and did say that Mr. Trevelyan had a headache. It was the first time that a name had been mentioned between them.

"Mr. Trevelyan! What a pretty name. It sounds like a novel," said Olivia.

"A very clever man," said Mr. Glascock, "and much liked by his own circle. But he has had trouble, and is unhappy."

"He looks unhappy," said Caroline.

"The most miserable looking man I ever saw in my life," said Olivia. Then it was agreed between them as they went up to Trompetta's hotel, that they would go on together by the ten o'clock train to Florence.

CHAPTER VI.

Verdict of the Jury—"Mad, my Lord."

TREVELYAN was left alone at Turin when Mr. Glascock went on to Florence with his fair American friends. It was imperatively necessary that he should remain at Turin, though he had no business there of any kind whatever, and did not know a single person in the city. And of all towns in Italy Turin has perhaps less of attraction to offer to the solitary visitor than any other. It is new and parallelogrammatic as an American town, is very cold in cold weather, very hot in hot weather, and now that it has been robbed of its life as a capital, is as dull and uninteresting as though it were German or English. There is the Armoury, and the river Po, and a good hotel. But what are these things to a man who is forced to live alone in a place for four days, or perhaps a week? Trevelyan was bound to remain at Turin till he should hear from Bozzle. No one but Bozzle knew his address; and he could do nothing till Bozzle should have communicated to him tidings of what was being done at St. Diddulph's.

There is perhaps no great social question so imperfectly understood among us at the present day as that which refers to the line which divides sanity from insanity. That this man is sane and that other unfortunately mad we do know well enough; and we know also that one man may be subject to various hallucinations,—may fancy himself to be a teapot, or what not,—and yet be in such a condition of mind as to call for no intervention either on behalf of his friends, or of the law; while another may be in possession of intellectual faculties capable of lucid exertion for the highest purposes, and yet be so mad that bodily restraint upon him is indispensable. We know that the sane man is responsible for what he does, and that the insane man is irresponsible; but we do not know, —we only guess wildly, at the state of mind of those, who now and again act like madmen, though no court or council of experts has declared them to be mad. The bias of the public mind is to press heavily on such men till the law attempts to touch them, as though they were thoroughly responsible; and then, when the law interferes, to screen them as though they were altogether irresponsible. The same juryman who would find a man mad who has murdered a young woman, would in private life express a desire that the same young man should be hung, crucified, or skinned alive, if he had moodily and without reason broken his faith to the young woman in lieu of killing her. Now Trevelyan was, in truth, mad on the subject of his wife's alleged infidelity. He had abandoned everything that he valued in the world, and had made himself wretched in every affair of life, because he could not submit to acknowledge to himself the possibility

of error on his own part. For that, in truth, was the condition of his mind. He had never hitherto believed that she had been false to her vow, and had sinned against him irredeemably; but he had thought that in her regard for another man she had slighted him; and, so thinking, he had subjected her to a severity of rebuke which no high-spirited woman could have borne. His wife had not tried to bear it,—in her indignation had not striven to cure the evil. Then had come his resolution that she should submit, or part from him; and, having so resolved, nothing could shake him. Though every friend he possessed was now against him,—including even Lady Milborough,—he was certain that he was right. Had not his wife sworn to obey him, and was not her whole conduct one tissue of disobedience? Would not the man who submitted to this find himself driven to submit to things worse? Let her own her fault, let her submit, and then she should come back to him.

He had not considered, when his resolutions to this effect were first forming themselves, that a separation between a man and his wife once effected cannot be annulled, and as it were cured, so as to leave no cicatrice behind. Gradually, as he spent day after day in thinking on this one subject, he came to feel that even were his wife to submit, to own her fault humbly, and to come back to him, this very coming back would in itself be a new wound. Could he go out again with his wife on his arm to the houses of those who knew that he had repudiated her because of her friendship with another man? Could he open again that house in Curzon Street, and let things go on quietly as they had gone before? He told himself

that it was impossible;—that he and she were ineffably disgraced;—that, if re-united, they must live buried out of sight in some remote distance. And he told himself, also, that he could never be with her again night or day without thinking of the separation. His happiness had been shipwrecked.

Then he had put himself into the hands of Mr. Bozzle, and Mr. Bozzle had taught him that women very often do go astray. Mr. Bozzle's idea of female virtue was not high, and he had opportunities of implanting his idea on his client's mind. Trevelyan hated the man. He was filled with disgust by Bozzle's words, and was made miserable by Bozzle's presence. Yet he came gradually to believe in Bozzle. Bozzle alone believed in him. There were none but Bozzle who did not bid him to submit himself to his disobedient wife. And then, as he came to believe in Bozzle, he grew to be more and more assured that no one but Bozzle could tell him facts. His chivalry, and love, and sense of woman's honour, with something of manly pride on his own part,—so he told himself,—had taught him to believe it to be impossible that his wife should have sinned. Bozzle, who knew the world, thought otherwise. Bozzle, who had no interest in the matter, one way or the other, would find out facts. What if his chivalry, and love, and manly pride had deceived him? There were women who sinned. Then he prayed that his wife might not be such a woman; and got up from his prayers almost convinced that she was a sinner.

His mind was at work upon it always. Could it be that she was so base as this—so vile a thing, so abject, such dirt, pollution, filth? But there were such

cases. Nay, were they not almost numberless? He found himself reading in the papers records of such things from day to day, and thought that in doing so he was simply acquiring experience necessary for himself. If it were so, he had indeed done well to separate himself from a thing so infamous. And if it were not so, how could it be that that man had gone to her in Devonshire? He had received from his wife's hands a short note addressed to the man, in which the man was desired by her not to go to her, or to write to her again, because of her husband's commands. He had shown this to Bozzle, and Bozzle had smiled. "It's just the sort of thing they does," Bozzle had said. "Then they writes another by post." He had consulted Bozzle as to the sending on of that letter, and Bozzle had been strongly of opinion that it should be forwarded, a copy having been duly taken and attested by himself. It might be very pretty evidence by-and-by. If the letter were not forwarded, Bozzle thought that the omission to do so might be given in evidence against his employer. Bozzle was very careful, and full of "evidence." The letter therefore was sent on to Colonel Osborne. "If there's billy-dous going between 'em we shall nobble 'em," said Bozzle. Trevelyan tore his hair in despair, but believed that there would be billy-dous.

He came to believe everything; and, though he prayed fervently that his wife might not be led astray, that she might be saved at any rate from utter vice, yet he almost came to hope that it might be otherwise;—not, indeed, with the hope of the sane man, who desires that which he tells himself to be for his advantage, but with the hope of the insane man, who

loves to feed his grievance, even though the grief should be his death. They who do not understand that a man may be brought to hope that which of all things is the most grievous to him, have not observed with sufficient closeness the perversity of the human mind. Trevelyan would have given all that he had to save his wife; would, even now, have cut his tongue out before he would have expressed to anyone,—save to Bozzle,—a suspicion that she could in truth have been guilty; was continually telling himself that further life would be impossible to him, if he, and she, and that child of theirs, should be thus disgraced;—and yet he expected it, believed it, and, after a fashion, he almost hoped it.

He was to wait at Turin till tidings should come from Bozzle, and after that he would go on to Venice; but he would not move from Turin till he should have received his first communication from England. When he had been three days at Turin they came to him, and, among other letters in Bozzle's packet, there was a letter addressed in his wife's handwriting. The letter was simply directed to Bozzle's house. In what possible way could his wife have found out ought of his dealings with Bozzle,—where Bozzle lived, or could have learned that letters intended for him should be sent to the man's own residence? Before, however, we inspect the contents of Mr. Bozzle's dispatch, we will go back and see how Mrs. Trevelyan had discovered the manner of forwarding a letter to her husband.

The matter of the address was, indeed, very simple. All letters for Trevelyan were to be redirected from the house in Curzon Street, and from the chambers in

Lincoln's Inn, to the Acrobats' Club; to the porter of the Acrobats' Club had been confided the secret, not of Bozzle's name, but of Bozzle's private address, No. 55, Stony Walk, Union Street, Borough. Thus all letters reaching the Acrobats', were duly sent to Mr. Bozzle's house. It may be remembered that Hugh Stanbury, on the occasion of his last visit to the parsonage of St. Diddulph's, was informed that Mrs. Trevelyan had a letter from her father for her husband, and that she knew not whither to send it. It may well be that, had the matter assumed no other interest in Stanbury's eyes than that given to it by Mrs. Trevelyan's very moderate anxiety to have the letter forwarded, he would have thought nothing about it; but having resolved, as he sat upon the knife-board of the omnibus,—the reader will, at any rate, remember those resolutions made on the top of the omnibus while Hugh was smoking his pipe,—having resolved that a deed should be done at St. Diddulph's, he resolved also that it should be done at once. He would not allow the heat of his purpose to be cooled by delay. He would go to St. Diddulph's at once, with his heart in his hand. But it might, he thought, be as well that he should have an excuse for his visit. So he called upon the porter at the Acrobats', and was successful in learning Mr. Trevelyan's address. "Stony Walk, Union Street, Borough," he said to himself, wondering; then it occurred to him that Bozzle, and Bozzle only among Trevelyan's friends, could live at Stony Walk in the Borough. Thus armed, he set out for St. Diddulph's;—and, as one of the effects of his visit to the East, Sir Marmaduke's note was forwarded to Louis Trevelyan at Turin.

CHAPTER VII.

Miss Nora Rowley is maltreated.

Hugh Stanbury, when he reached the parsonage, found no difficulty in making his way into the joint presence of Mrs. Outhouse, Mrs. Trevelyan, and Nora. He was recognised by the St. Diddulph's party as one who had come over to their side, as a friend of Trevelyan who had found himself constrained to condemn his friend in spite of his friendship, and was consequently very welcome. And there was no difficulty about giving the address. The ladies wondered how it came to pass that Mr. Trevelyan's letters should be sent to such a locality, and Hugh expressed his surprise also. He thought it discreet to withhold his suspicions about Mr. Bozzle, and simply expressed his conviction that letters sent in accordance with the directions given by the club-porter would reach their destination. Then the boy was brought down, and they were all very confidential and very unhappy together. Mrs. Trevelyan could see no end to the cruelty of her position, and declared that her father's anger against her husband was so great that she anticipated his coming with almost more of fear than of hope. Mrs. Outhouse expressed an opinion that Mr. Trevelyan must surely be mad; and Nora suggested that the possibility of such perversity on the part of a man made it almost unwise in any woman to trust herself to the power of a husband. "But there are not many like him, thank God," said Mrs. Outhouse, bridling in her wrath. Thus they were very friendly together, and Hugh was allowed to feel that he stood upon com-

fortable terms in the parsonage;—but he did not as yet see how he was to carry out his project for the present day.

At last Mrs. Trevelyan went away with the child. Hugh felt that he ought to go, but stayed courageously. He thought he could perceive that Nora suspected the cause of his assiduity; but it was quite evident that Mrs. Outhouse did not do so. Mrs. Outhouse, having reconciled herself to the young man, was by no means averse to his presence. She went on talking about the wickedness of Trevelyan, and her brother's anger, and the fate of the little boy, till at last the little boy's mother came back into the room. Then Mrs. Outhouse went. They must excuse her for a few minutes, she said. If only she would have gone a few minutes sooner, how well her absence might have been excused. Nora understood it all now; and though she became almost breathless, she was not surprised, when Hugh got up from his chair and asked her sister to go away. "Mrs. Trevelyan," he said, "I want to speak a few words to your sister. I hope you will give me the opportunity."

"Nora!" exclaimed Mrs. Trevelyan.

"She knows nothing about it," said Hugh.

"Am I to go?" said Mrs. Trevelyan to her sister. But Nora said never a word. She sat perfectly fixed, not turning her eyes from the object on which she was gazing.

"Pray,—pray do," said Hugh.

"I cannot think that it will be for any good," said Mrs. Trevelyan; "but I know that she may be trusted. And I suppose it ought to be so, if you wish it."

"I do wish it, of all things," said Hugh, still

standing up, and almost turning the elder sister out of the room by the force of his look and voice. Then, with another pause of a moment, Mrs. Trevelyan rose from her chair and left the room, closing the door after her.

Hugh, when he found that the coast was clear for him, immediately began his task with a conviction that not a moment was to be lost. He had told himself a dozen times that the matter was hopeless, that Nora had shown him by every means in her power that she was indifferent to him, that she with all her friends would know that such a marriage was out of the question; and he had in truth come to believe that the mission which he had in hand was one in which success was not possible. But he thought that it was his duty to go on with it. "If a man love a woman, even though it be the king and the beggar-woman reversed,—though it be a beggar and a queen, he should tell her of it. If it be so, she has a right to know it and to take her choice. And he has a right to tell her, and to say what he can for himself." Such was Hugh's doctrine in the matter; and, acting upon it, he found himself alone with his mistress.

"Nora," he said, speaking perhaps with more energy than the words required, "I have come here to tell you that I love you, and to ask you to be my wife."

Nora, for the last ten minutes, had been thinking that this would come,—that it would come at once; and yet she was not at all prepared with an answer. It was now weeks since she had confessed to herself frankly that nothing else but this,—this one thing which was now happening, this one thing which had now happened,—that nothing else could make her

happy, or could touch her happiness. She had refused a man whom she otherwise would have taken, because her heart had been given to Hugh Stanbury. She had been bold enough to tell that other suitor that it was so, though she had not mentioned the rival's name. She had longed for some expression of love from this man when they had been at Nuncombe together, and had been fiercely angry with him because no such expression had come from him. Day after day, since she had been with her aunt, she had told herself that she was a broken-hearted woman, because she had given away all that she had to give and had received nothing in return. Had he said a word that might have given her hope, how happy could she have been in hoping. Now he had come to her with a plain-spoken offer, telling her that he loved her, and asking her to be his wife,—and she was altogether unable to answer. How could she consent to be his wife, knowing as she did that there was no certainty of an income on which they could live? How could she tell her father and mother that she had engaged herself to marry a man who might or might not make £400 a year, and who already had a mother and sister depending on him?

In truth, had he come more gently to her, his chance of a happy answer,—of an answer which might be found to have in it something of happiness,—would have been greater. He might have said a word which she could not but have answered softly;—and then from that constrained softness other gentleness would have followed, and so he would have won her in spite of her discretion. She would have surrendered gradually, accepting on the score of her great love all the penalties of a long and precarious engagement. But when she

was asked to come and be his wife, now and at once, she felt that in spite of her love it was impossible that she could accede to a request so sudden, so violent, so monstrous. He stood over her as though expecting an instant answer; and then, when she had sat dumb before him for a minute, he repeated his demand. "Tell me, Nora, can you love me? If you knew how thoroughly I have loved you, you would at least feel something for me."

To tell him that she did not love him was impossible to her. But how was she to refuse him without telling him either a lie, or the truth? Some answer she must give him; and as to that matter of marrying him, the answer must be a negative. Her education had been of that nature which teaches girls to believe that it is a crime to marry a man without an assured income. Assured morality in a husband is a great thing. Assured good temper is very excellent. Assured talent, religion, amiability, truth, honesty, are all desirable. But an assured income is indispensable. Whereas, in truth, the income may come hereafter; but the other things, unless they be there already, will hardly be forthcoming. "Mr. Stanbury," she said, "your suddenness has quite astounded me."

"Ah, yes; but how should I not be sudden? I have come here on purpose to say this to you. If I do not say it now——"

"You heard what Emily said."

"No;—what did she say?"

"She said that it would not be for good that you should speak to me thus."

"Why not for good? But she is unhappy, and looks gloomily at things."

"Yes, indeed."

"But all the world need not be sad for ever because she has been unfortunate."

"Not all the world, Mr. Stanbury;—but you must not be surprised if it affects me."

"But would that prevent your loving me,—if you did love me? But, Nora, I do not expect you to love me,—not yet. I do not say that I expect it,—ever But if you would——. Nora, I can do no more than tell you the simple truth. Just listen to me for a minute. You know how I came to be intimate with you all in Curzon Street. The first day I saw you I loved you; and there has come no change yet. It is months now since I first knew that I loved you. Well; I told myself more than once,—when I was down at Nuncombe for instance,—that I had no right to speak to you. What right can a poor devil like me have, who lives from hand to mouth, to ask such a girl as you to be his wife? And so I said nothing,—though it was on my lips every moment that I was there." Nora remembered at the moment how she had looked to his lips, and had not seen the words there. "But I think there is something unmanly in this. If you cannot give me a grain of hope;—if you tell me that there never can be hope, it is my misfortune. It will be very grievous, but I will bear it. But that will be better than puling and moping about without daring to tell my tale. I am not ashamed of it. I have fallen in love with you, Nora, and I think it best to come for an answer."

He held out his arms as though he thought that she might perhaps come to him. Indeed he had no idea of any such coming on her part; but she, as she looked

at him, almost thought that it was her duty to go. Had she a right to withhold herself from him, she who loved him so dearly? Had he stepped forward and taken her in his arms, it might be that all power of refusal would soon have been beyond her power.

"Mr. Stanbury," she said, "you have confessed yourself that it is impossible."

"But do you love me;—do you think that it is possible that you should ever love me?"

"You know, Mr. Stanbury, that you should not say anything further. You know that it cannot be."

"But do you love me?"

"You are ungenerous not to take an answer without driving me to be uncourteous."

"I do not care for courtesy. Tell me the truth. Can you ever love me? With one word of hope I will wait, and work, and feel myself to be a hero. I will not go till you tell me that you cannot love me."

"Then I must tell you so."

"What is it you will tell me, Nora? Speak it. Say it. If I knew that a girl disliked me, nothing should make me press myself upon her. Am I odious to you, Nora?"

"No; not odious,—but very, very unfair."

"I will have the truth if I be ever so unfair," he said. And by this time probably some inkling of the truth had reached his intelligence. There was already a tear in Nora's eye, but he did not pity her. She owed it to him to tell him the truth, and he would have it from her if it was to be reached. "Nora," he said, "listen to me again. All my heart and soul are in this. It is everything to me. If you can love me you are bound to say so. By Jove, I will believe you

do, unless you swear to me that it is not so!" He was now holding her by the hand and looking closely into her face.

"Mr. Stanbury," she said, "let me go; pray, pray let me go."

"Not till you say that you love me. Oh, Nora, I believe that you love me. You do; yes; you do love me. Dearest, dearest Nora, would you not say a word to make me the happiest man in the world?" And now he had his arm round her waist.

"Let me go," she said, struggling through her tears and covering her face with her hands. "You are very, very wicked. I will never speak to you again. Nay, but you shall let me go!" And then she was out of his arms and had escaped from the room before he had managed to touch her face with his lips.

As he was thinkiug how he also might escape now, —might escape and comfort himself with his triumph,— Mrs. Outhouse returned to the chamber. She was very demure, and her manner towards him was considerably changed since she had left the chamber. "Mr. Stanbury," she said, "this kind of thing mustn't go any further indeed;—at least not in my house."

"What kind of thing, Mrs. Outhouse?"

"Well;—what my elder niece has told me. I have not seen Miss Rowley since she left you. I am quite sure she has behaved with discretion."

"Indeed she has, Mrs. Outhouse."

"The fact is my nieces are in grief and trouble, and this is no time or place for love-making. I am sorry to be uncivil, but I must ask you not to come here any more."

"I will stay away from this house, certainly, if you bid me."

"I am very sorry; but I must bid you. Sir Marmaduke will be home in the spring, and if you have anything to say to him of course you can see him."

Then Hugh Stanbury took his leave of Mrs. Outhouse; but as he went home, again on the knifeboard of an omnibus, he smoked the pipe of triumph rather than the pipe of contemplation.

CHAPTER VIII.

"C. G."

THE Miss Spaldings were met at the station at Florence by their uncle, the American Minister, by their cousin, the American Secretary of Legation, and by three or four other dear friends and relations, who were there to welcome the newcomers to sunny Italy. Mr. Glascock, therefore, who ten minutes since had been, and had felt himself to be, quite indispensable to their comfort, suddenly became as though he were nothing and nobody. Who is there that has not felt these sudden disruptions to the intimacies and friendships of a long journey? He bowed to them, and they to him, and then they were whirled away in their grandeur. He put himself into a small, open hackney-carriage, and had himself driven to the York Hotel, feeling himself to be deserted and desolate. The two Miss Spaldings were the daughters of a very respectable lawyer at Boston, whereas Mr. Glascock was heir to a peerage, to an enormous fortune, and to one of the finest places in England. But he thought nothing of this at the

time. As he went, he was meditating which young woman was the most attractive, Nora Rowley or Caroline Spalding. He had no doubt but that Nora was the prettier, the pleasanter in manner, the better dressed, the more engaging in all that concerned the outer woman; but he thought that he had never met any lady who talked better than Caroline Spalding. And what was Nora Rowley's beauty to him? Had she not told him that she was the property of some one else; or, for the matter of that, what was Miss Spalding to him? They had parted, and he was going on to Naples in two days. He had said some half-defined word as to calling at the American Embassy, but it had not been taken up by either of the ladies. He had not pressed it, and so they had parted without an understanding as to a future meeting.

The double journey, from Turin to Bologna and from Bologna to Florence, is very long, and forms ample time for a considerable intimacy. There had, too, been a long day's journeying together before that; and with no women is a speedy intimacy so possible, or indeed so profitable, as with Americans. They fear nothing,—neither you nor themselves; and talk with as much freedom as though they were men. It may, perhaps, be assumed to be true as a rule, that women's society is always more agreeable to men than that of other men,—except for the lack of ease. It undoubtedly is so when the women be young and pretty. There is a feeling, however, among pretty women in Europe that such freedom is dangerous, and it is withheld. There is such danger, and more or less of such withholding is expedient; but the American woman does not recognise the danger; and, if she withhold the

grace of her countenance and the pearls of her speech, it is because she is not desirous of the society which is proffered to her. These two American sisters had not withholden their pearls from Mr. Glascock. He was much their senior in age; he was gentle in his manners, and they probably recognised him to be a safe companion. They had no idea who he was, and had not heard his name when they parted from him. But it was not probable that they should have been with him so long, and that they should leave him without further thought of him, without curiosity, or a desire to know more of him. They had seen "C. G.," in large letters, on his dressing-bag, and that was all they had learned as to his identity. He had known their names well, and had once called Olivia by hers, in the hurry of speaking to her sister. He had apologised, and there had been a little laugh, and a discussion about the use of Christian names,—such as is very conducive to intimacy between gentlemen and ladies. When you can talk to a young lady about her own Christian name, you are almost entitled for the nonce to use it.

Mr. Glascock went to his hotel, and was very moody and desolate. His name was very soon known there, and he received the honours due to his rank and station. "I should like to travel in America," he said to himself, "if I could be sure that no one would find out who I was." He had received letters at Turin, stating that his father was better, and, therefore, he intended to remain two days at Florence. The weather was still very hot, and Florence in the middle of September is much preferable to Naples.

That night, when the two Miss Spaldings were

alone together, they discussed their fellow-traveller thoroughly. Something, of course, had been said about him to their uncle the minister, to their aunt the minister's wife, and to their cousin the secretary of legation. But travellers will always observe that the dear new friends they have made on their journey are not interesting to the dear old friends whom they meet afterwards. There may be some touch of jealousy in this; and then, though you, the traveller, are fully aware that there has been something special in the case which has made this new friendship more peculiar than others that have sprung up in similar circumstances, fathers and brothers and wives and sisters do not see it in that light. They suspect, perhaps, that the new friend was a bagman, or an opera dancer, and think that the affair need not be made of importance. The American Minister had cast his eye on Mr. Glascock during that momentary parting, and had not thought much of Mr. Glascock. "He was, certainly, a gentleman," Caroline had said. "There are a great many English gentlemen," the minister had replied.

"I thought you would have asked him to call," Olivia said to her sister. "He did offer."

"I know he did. I heard it."

"Why didn't you tell him he might come?"

"Because we are not in Boston, Livy. It might be the most horrible thing in the world to do here in Florence; and it may make a difference, because Uncle Jonas is minister."

"Why should that make a difference? Do you mean that one isn't to see one's own friends? That must be nonsense."

"But he isn't a friend, Livy."

"It seems to me as if I'd known him for ever. That soft, monotonous voice, which never became excited and never disagreeable, is as familiar to me as though I had lived with it all my life."

"I thought him very pleasant."

"Indeed, you did, Carry. And he thought you pleasant too. Doesn't it seem odd? You were mending his glove for him this very afternoon, just as if he were your brother."

"Why shouldn't I mend his glove?"

"Why not, indeed? He was entitled to have everything mended after getting us such a good dinner at Bologna. By-the-bye, you never paid him."

"Yes, I did,—when you were not by."

"I wonder who he is! C. G.! That fine man in the brown coat was his servant, you know. I thought at first that C. G. must have been cracked, and that the tall man was his keeper."

"I never knew any one less like a madman."

"No;—but the man was so queer. He did nothing, you know. We hardly saw him, if you remember, at Turin. All he did was to tie the shawls at Bologna. What can any man want with another man about with him like that, unless he is cracked either in body or mind?"

"You'd better ask C. G. yourself."

"I shall never see C. G. again, I suppose. I should like to see him again. I guess you would too, Carry. Eh?"

"Of course, I should;—why not?"

"I never knew a man so imperturbable, and who had yet so much to say for himself. I wonder what he is! Perhaps he's on business, and that man was a kind of a clerk."

"He had livery buttons on," said Carry.

"And does that make a difference?"

"I don't think they put clerks into livery, even in England."

"Nor yet mad doctors," said Olivia. "Well, I like him very much; and the only thing against him is that he should have a man, six feet high, going about with him doing nothing."

"You'll make me angry, Livy, if you talk in that way. It's uncharitable."

"In what way?"

"About a mad doctor."

"It's my belief," said Olivia, "that he's an English swell, a lord, or a duke;—and it's my belief, too, that he's in love with you."

"It's my belief, Livy, that you're a regular ass;"—and so the conversation was ended on that occasion.

On the next day, about noon, the American Minister, as a part of the duty which he owed to his country, read in a publication of that day, issued for the purpose, the names of the new arrivals at Florence. First and foremost was that of the Honourable Charles Glascock, with his suite, at the York Hotel, en route to join his father, Lord Peterborough, at Naples. Having read the news first to himself, the minister read it out loud in the presence of his nieces.

"That's our friend C. G.," said Livy.

"I should think not," said the minister, who had his own ideas about an English lord.

"I'm sure it is, because of the tall man with the buttons," said Olivia.

"It's very unlikely," said the secretary of legation. "Lord Peterborough is a man of immense wealth, very

old, indeed. They say he is dying at Naples. This man is his eldest son."

"Is that any reason why he shouldn't have been civil to us?" asked Olivia.

"I don't think he is the sort of man likely to sit up in the banquette; and he would have posted over the Alps. Moreover, he had his suite with him."

"His suite was Buttons," said Olivia. "Only fancy, Carry, we've been waited on for two days by a lord as is to be, and didn't know it! And you have mended the tips of his lordship's glove!" But Carry said nothing at all.

Late on that same evening, they met Mr. Glascock close to the Duomo, under the shade of the Campanile. He had come out as they had done, to see by moonlight that loveliest of all works made by man's hands. They were with the minister, but Mr. Glascock came up and shook hands with them.

"I would introduce you to my uncle, Mr. Spalding," said Olivia,—"only,—as it happens,—we have never yet heard your name."

"My name is Mr. Glascock," said he, smiling. Then the introduction was made; and the American Minister took off his hat, and was very affable.

"Only think, Carry," said Olivia, when they were alone that evening, "if you were to become the wife of an English lord!"

CHAPTER IX.

Shewing what took place at St. Diddulph's.

NORA ROWLEY, when she escaped from the violence of her lover, at once rushed up to her own room, and managed to fasten herself in before she had been seen by any one. Her elder sister had at once gone to her aunt when, at Hugh's request, she had left the room, thinking it right that Mrs. Outhouse should know what was being done in her own house. Mrs. Outhouse had considered the matter patiently for awhile, giving the lovers the benefit of her hesitation, and had then spoken her mind to Stanbury, as we have already heard. He had, upon the whole, been so well pleased with what had occurred, that he was not in the least angry with the parson's wife when he left the parsonage. As soon as he was gone Mrs. Outhouse was at once joined by her elder niece, but Nora remained for a while alone in her room.

Had she committed herself; and if so, did she regret it? He had behaved very badly to her, certainly, taking her by the hand and putting his arm round her waist. And then had he not even attempted to kiss her? He had done all this, although she had been resolute in refusing to speak to him one word of kindness,—though she had told him with all the energy and certainty of which she was mistress, that she would never be his wife. If a girl were to be subjected to such treatment as this when she herself had been so firm, so discreet, so decided, then indeed it would be unfit that a girl should trust herself with a man. She had never thought that he had been such a one as

that, to ill-use her, to lay a hand on her in violence, to refuse to take an answer. She threw herself on the bed and sobbed, and then hid her face,—and was conscious that in spite of this acting before herself she was the happiest girl alive. He had behaved very badly;—of course, he had behaved most wickedly, and she would tell him so some day. But was he not the dearest fellow living? Did ever man speak with more absolute conviction of love in every tone of his voice? Was it not the finest, noblest heart that ever throbbed beneath a waistcoat? Had not his very wickedness come from the overpowering truth of his affection for her? She would never quite forgive him because it had been so very wrong; but she would be true to him for ever and ever. Of course they could not marry. What!—would she go to him and be a clog round his neck, and a weight upon him for ever, bringing him down to the gutter by the burden of her own useless and unworthy self? No. She would never so injure him. She would not even hamper him by an engagement. But yet she would be true to him. She had an idea that in spite of all her protestations,—which, as she looked back upon them, appeared to her to have been louder than they had been,—that through the teeth of her denials, something of the truth had escaped from her. Well,—let it be so. It was the truth, and why should he not know it? Then she pictured to herself a long romance, in which the heroine lived happily on the simple knowledge that she had been beloved. And the reader may be sure that in this romance Mr. Glascock with his splendid prospects filled one of the characters.

She had been so wretched at Nuncombe Putney

when she had felt herself constrained to admit to herself that this man for whom she had sacrificed herself did not care for her, that she could not now but enjoy her triumph. After she had sobbed upon the bed, she got up and walked about the room smiling; and she would now press her hands to her forehead, and then shake her tresses, and then clasp her own left hand with her right, as though he were still holding it. Wicked man! Why had he been so wicked and so violent? And why, why, why had she not once felt his lips upon her brow?

And she was pleased with herself. Her sister had rebuked her because she had refused to make her fortune by marrying Mr. Glascock; and, to own the truth, she had rebuked herself on the same score when she found that Hugh Stanbury had not had a word of love to say to her. It was not that she regretted the grandeur which she had lost, but that she should, even within her own thoughts, with the consciousness of her own bosom, have declared herself unable to receive another man's devotion because of her love for this man who neglected her. Now she was proud of herself. Whether it might be accounted as good or ill-fortune that she had ever seen Hugh Stanbury, it must at any rate be right that she should be true to him now that she had seen him, and had loved him. To know that she loved and that she was not loved again had nearly killed her. But such was not her lot. She ·o had been successful with her quarry, and had struck er game, and brought down her deer. He had been ery violent with her, but his violence had at least ade the matter clear. He did love her. She would e satisfied with that, and would endeavour so to live

that that alone should make life happy for her. How should she get his photograph,—and a lock of his hair?—and when again might she have the pleasure of placing her own hand within his great, rough, violent grasp? Then she kissed the hand which he had held, and opened the door of her room, at which her sister was now knocking.

"Nora, dear, will you not come down?"

"Not yet, Emily. Very soon I will."

"And what has happened, dearest?"

"There is nothing to tell, Emily."

"There must be something to tell. What did he say to you?"

"Of course you know what he said."

"And what answer did you make?"

"I told him that it could not be."

"And did he take that,—as final, Nora?"

"Of course not. What man ever takes a No as final?"

"When you said No to Mr. Glascock he took it."

"That was different, Emily."

"But how different? I don't see the difference, except that if you could have brought yourself to like Mr. Glascock, it would have been the greatest thing in the world for you, and for all of them."

"Would you have me take a man, Emily, that I didn't care one straw for, merely because he was a lord? You can't mean that."

"I'm not talking about Mr. Glascock now, Nora."

"Yes, you are. And what's the use? He is gone, and there's an end of it."

"And is Mr. Stanbury gone?"

"Of course."

"In the same way?" asked Mrs. Trevelyan.

"How can I tell about his ways? No; it is not in the same way. There! He went in a very different way."

"How was it different, Nora?"

"Oh, so different. I can't tell you how. Mr. Glascock will never come back again."

"And Mr. Stanbury will?" said the elder sister. Nora made no reply, but after a while nodded her head. "And you want him to come back?" She paused again, and again nodded her head. "Then you have accepted him?"

"I have not accepted him. I have refused him. I have told him that it was impossible."

"And yet you wish him back again!" Nora again nodded her head. "That is a state of things I cannot at all understand," said Mrs. Trevelyan, "and would not believe unless you told me so yourself."

"And you think me very wrong, of course. I will endeavour to do nothing wrong, but it is so. I have not said a word of encouragement to Mr. Stanbury; but I love him with all my heart. Ought I to tell you a lie when you question me? Or is it natural that I should never wish to see again a person whom I love better than all the world? It seems to me that a girl can hardly be right if she have any choice of her own. Here are two men, one rich and the other poor. I shall fall to the ground between them. I know that. I have fallen to the ground already. I like the one I can't marry. I don't care a straw for the one who could give me a grand house. That is falling to the ground. But I don't see that it is hard to understand, or that I have disgraced myself."

"I said nothing of disgrace, Nora."

"But you looked it."

"I did not intend to look it, dearest."

"And remember this, Emily, I have told you everything because you asked me. I do not mean to tell anybody else, at all. Mamma would not understand me. I have not told him, and I shall not."

"You mean Mr. Stanbury?"

"Yes; I mean Mr. Stanbury. As to Mr. Glascock, of course I shall tell mamma that. I have no secret there. That is his secret, and I suppose mamma should know it. But I will have nothing told about the other. Had I accepted him, or even hinted to him that I cared for him, I would tell mamma at once."

After that there came something of a lecture, or something, rather, of admonition, from Mrs. Outhouse. That lady did not attempt to upbraid, or to find any fault; but observed that as she understood that Mr. Stanbury had no means whatever, and as Nora herself had none, there had better be no further intercourse between them, till, at any rate, Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley should be in London. "So I told him that he must not come here any more, my dear," said Mrs. Outhouse.

"You are quite right, aunt. He ought not to come here."

"I am so glad that you agree with me."

"I agree with you altogether. I think I was bound to see him when he asked to see me; but the thing is altogether out of the question. I don't think he'll come any more, aunt." Then Mrs. Outhouse was quite satisfied that no harm had been done.

A month had now passed since anything had been

heard at St. Diddulph's from Mr. Trevelyan, and it seemed that many months might go on in the same dull way. When Mrs. Trevelyan first found herself in her uncle's house, a sum of two hundred pounds had been sent to her; and since that she had received a letter from her husband's lawyer saying that a similar amount would be sent to her every three months, as long as she was separated from her husband. A portion of this she had given over to Mr. Outhouse; but this pecuniary assistance by no means comforted that unfortunate gentleman in his trouble. "I don't want to get into debt," he said, "by keeping a lot of people whom I haven't the means to feed. And I don't want to board and lodge my nieces and their family at so much a head. It's very hard upon me either way." And so it was. All the comfort of his home was destroyed, and he was driven to sacrifice his independence by paying his tradesmen with a portion of Mrs. Trevelyan's money. The more he thought of it all, and the more he discussed the matter with his wife, the more indignant they became with the truant husband. "I can't believe," he said, "but what Mr. Bideawhile could make him come back, if he chose to do his duty."

"But they say that Mr. Trevelyan is in Italy, my dear."

"And if I went to Italy, might I leave you to starve, and take my income with me?"

"He doesn't leave her quite to starve, my dear."

"But isn't a man bound to stay with his wife? I never heard of such a thing,—never. And I'm sure that there must be something wrong. A man can't go away and leave his wife to live with her uncle and aunt. It isn't right."

"But what can we do?"

Mr. Outhouse was forced to acknowledge that nothing could be done. He was a man to whom the quiescence of his own childless house was the one pleasure of his existence. And of that he was robbed because this wicked madman chose to neglect all his duties, and leave his wife without a house to shelter her. "Supposing that she couldn't have come here, what then?" said Mr. Outhouse. "I did tell him, as plain as words could speak, that we couldn't receive them." "But here they are," said Mrs. Outhouse, "and here they must remain till my brother comes to England." "It's the most monstrous thing that I ever heard of in all my life," said Mr. Outhouse. "He ought to be locked up;—that's what he ought."

It was hard and it became harder, when a gentleman, whom Mr. Outhouse certainly did not wish to see, called upon him about the latter end of September. Mr. Outhouse was sitting alone, in the gloomy parlour of his parsonage,—for his own study had been given up to other things, since this great inroad had been made upon his family;—he was sitting alone on one Saturday morning, preparing for the duties of the next day, with various manuscript sermons lying on the table around him, when he was told that a gentleman had called to see him. Had Mr. Outhouse been an incumbent at the West-end of London, or had his maid been a West-end servant, in all probability the gentleman's name would have been demanded; but Mr. Outhouse was a man who was not very ready in foreseeing and preventing misfortunes, and the girl who opened the door was not trained to discreet usages in such matters. As she announced the fact that there

was a gentleman, she pointed to the door, to show that the gentleman was there; and before Mr. Outhouse had been able to think whether it would be prudent for him to make some preliminary inquiry, Colonel Osborne was in the room. Now, as it happened, these two men had never hitherto met each other, though one was the brother-in-law of Sir Marmaduke Rowley, and the other had been his very old friend. "My name, Mr. Outhouse, is Colonel Osborne," said the visitor, coming forward, with his hand out. The clergyman, of course, took his hand and asked him to be seated. "We have known each other's names very long," continued the Colonel, "though I do not think we have ever yet had an opportunity of becoming acquainted."

"No," said Mr. Outhouse; "we have never been acquainted, I believe." He might have added, that he had no desire whatever to make such acquaintance; and his manner, over which he himself had no control, did almost say as much. Indeed, this coming to his house of the suspected lover of his niece appeared to him to be a heavy addition to his troubles; for, although he was disposed to take his niece's part against her husband to any possible length,—even to the locking up of the husband as a madman, if it were possible, —nevertheless, he had almost as great a horror of the Colonel, as though the husband's allegation as to the lover had been true as gospel. Because Trevelyan had been wrong altogether, Colonel Osborne was not the less wrong. Because Trevelyan's suspicions were to Mr. Outhouse wicked and groundless, he did not the less regard the presumed lover to be an iniquitous roaring lion, going about seeking whom he might

devour. Elderly unmarried men of fashion generally, and especially colonels, and majors, and members of parliament, and such like, were to him as black sheep or roaring lions. They were "fruges consumere nati;" men who stood on club doorsteps talking naughtily and doing nothing, wearing sleek clothing, for which they very often did not pay, and never going to church. It seemed to him,—in his ignorance,—that such men had none of the burdens of this world upon their shoulders, and that, therefore, they stood in great peril of the burdens of the next. It was, doubtless, his special duty to deal with men in such peril;—but those wicked ones with whom he was concerned were those whom he could reach. Now, the Colonel Osbornes of the earth were not to be got at by any clergyman, or, as far as Mr. Outhouse could see, by any means of grace. That story of the rich man and the camel seemed to him to be specially applicable to such people. How was such a one as Colonel Osborne to be shewn the way through the eye of a needle? To Mr. Outhouse, his own brother-in-law, Sir Marmaduke, was almost of the same class,—for he frequented clubs when in London, and played whist, and talked of the things of the world,—such as the Derby, and the levées, and West-end dinner parties,—as though they were all in all to him. He, to be sure, was weighted with so large a family that there might be hope for him. The eye of the needle could not be closed against him as a rich man; but he savoured of the West-end, and was worldly, and consorted with such men as this Colonel Osborne. When Colonel Osborne introduced himself to Mr. Outhouse, it was almost as though Apollyon had made his way into the parsonage of St. Diddulph's.

"Mr. Outhouse," said the Colonel, "I have thought it best to come to you the very moment that I got back to town from Scotland." Mr. Outhouse bowed, and was bethinking himself slowly what manner of speech he would adopt. "I leave town again to-morrow for Dorsetshire. I am going down to my friends, the Brambers, for partridge shooting." Mr. Outhouse knitted his thick brows, in further inward condemnation. Partridge shooting! yes;—this was September, and partridge shooting would be the probable care and occupation of such a man at such a time. A man without a duty in the world! Perhaps, added to this there was a feeling that, whereas Colonel Osborne could shoot Scotch grouse in August, and Dorsetshire partridges in September, and go about throughout the whole year like a roaring lion, he, Mr. Outhouse, was forced to remain at St. Diddulph's-in-the-East, from January to December, with the exception of one small parson's week spent at Margate, for the benefit of his wife's health. If there was such a thought, or, rather, such a feeling, who will say that it was not natural? "But I could not go through London without seeing you," continued the Colonel. "This is a most frightful infatuation of Trevelyan!"

"Very frightful, indeed," said Mr. Outhouse.

"And, on my honour as a gentleman, not the slightest cause in the world."

"You are old enough to be the lady's father," said Mr. Outhouse, managing in that to get one blow at the gallant Colonel.

"Just so. God bless my soul!" Mr. Outhouse shrunk visibly at this profane allusion to the Colonel's soul. "Why, I've known her father ever so many

years. As you say, I might almost be her father myself." As far as age went, such certainly might have been the case, for the Colonel was older than Sir Marmaduke. "Look here, Mr. Outhouse, here is a letter I got from Emily——"

"From Mrs. Trevelyan?"

"Yes, from Mrs. Trevelyan; and as well as I can understand, it must have been sent to me by Trevelyan himself. Did you ever hear of such a thing? And now I'm told he has gone away, nobody knows where, and has left her here."

"He has gone away,—nobody knows where."

"Of course, I don't ask to see her."

"It would be imprudent, Colonel Osborne; and could not be permitted in this house."

"I don't ask it. I have known Emily Trevelyan since she was an infant, and have always loved her. I'm her godfather, for aught I know,—though one forgets things of that sort." Mr. Outhouse again knit his eyebrows and shuddered visibly. "She and I have been fast friends,—and why not? But, of course, I can't interfere."

"If you ask me, Colonel Osborne, I should say that you can do nothing in the matter;—except to remain away from her. When Sir Marmaduke is in England, you can see him, if you please."

"See him;—of course,—I shall see him. And, by George, Louis Trevelyan will have to see him, too! I shouldn't like to have to stand up before Rowley if I had treated a daughter of his in such a fashion. You know Rowley, of course?"

"Oh, yes; I know him."

"He's not the sort of man to bear this sort of

thing. He'll about tear Trevelyan in pieces if he gets hold of him. God bless my soul——" the eyebrows went to work again,—"I never heard of such a thing in all my life! Does he pay anything for them, Mr. Outhouse?"

This was dreadful to the poor clergyman. "That is a subject which we surely need not discuss," said he. Then he remembered that such speech on his part was like to a subterfuge, and he found it necessary to put himself right. "I am repaid for the maintenance here of my nieces, and the little boy, and their attendants. I do not know why the question should be asked, but such is the fact."

"Then they are here by agreement between you and him?"

"No, sir; they are not. There is no such agreement. But I do not like these interrogatives from a stranger as to matters which should be private."

"You cannot wonder at my interest, Mr. Outhouse."

"You had better restrain it, sir, till Sir Marmaduke arrives. I shall then wash my hands of the affair."

"And she is pretty well;—Emily, I mean?"

"Mrs. Trevelyan's health is good."

"Pray tell her though I could not—might not ask to see her, I came to inquire after her the first moment that I was in London. Pray tell her how much I feel for her;—but she will know that. When Sir Marmaduke is here, of course, we shall meet. When she is once more under her father's wing, she need not be restrained by any absurd commands from a husband who has deserted her. At present, of course, I do not ask to see her."

"Of course, you do not, Colonel Osborne."

"And give my love to Nora;—dear little Nora! There can be no reason why she and I should not shake hands."

"I should prefer that it should not be so in this house," said the clergyman, who was now standing,—in expectation that his unwelcome guest would go.

"Very well;—so be it. But you will understand I could not be in London without coming and asking after them." Then the Colonel at last took his leave, and Mr. Outhouse was left to his solitude and his sermons.

Mrs. Outhouse was very angry when she heard of the visit. "Men of that sort," she said, "think it a fine thing, and talk about it. I believe the poor girl is as innocent as I am, but he isn't innocent. He likes it."

"'It is easier,'" said Mr. Outhouse solemnly, "'for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'"

"I don't know that he is a rich man," said Mrs. Outhouse; "but he wouldn't have come here if he had been honest."

Mrs. Trevelyan was told of the visit, and simply said that of course it was out of the question that she should have seen Colonel Osborne. Nevertheless she seemed to think it quite natural that he should have called, and defended him with some energy when her aunt declared that he had been much to blame. "He is not bound to obey Mr. Trevelyan because I am," said Emily.

"He is bound to abstain from evil doing," said Mrs. Outhouse; "and he oughtn't to have come. There;

let that be enough, my dear. Your uncle doesn't wish to have it talked about." Nevertheless it was talked about between the two sisters. Nora was of opinion that Colonel Osborne had been wrong, whereas Emily defended him. "It seems to me to have been the most natural thing in life," said she.

Had Colonel Osborne made the visit as Sir Marmaduke's friend, feeling himself to be an old man, it might have been natural. When a man has come to regard himself as being, on the score of age, about as fit to be a young lady's lover as though he were an old woman instead of an old man,—which some men will do when they are younger even than was Colonel Osborne,—he is justified in throwing behind him as utterly absurd the suspicions of other people. But Colonel Osborne cannot be defended altogether on that plea.

CHAPTER X.

Miss Stanbury and Mr. Gibson become two.

THERE came to be a very gloomy fortnight at Miss Stanbury's house in the Close. For two or three days after Mr. Gibson's dismissal at the hands of Miss Stanbury herself, Brooke Burgess was still in the house, and his presence saved Dorothy from the full weight of her aunt's displeasure. There was the necessity of looking after Brooke, and scolding him, and of praising him to Martha, and of dispraising him, and of seeing that he had enough to eat, and of watching whether he smoked in the house, and of quarrelling with him about everything under the sun, which together so employed Miss Stanbury that she satisfied herself with

glances at Dorothy which were felt to be full of charges of ingratitude. Dorothy was thankful that it should be so, and bore the glances with abject submission. And then there was a great comfort to her in Brooke's friendship. On the second day after Mr. Gibson had gone she found herself talking to Brooke quite openly upon the subject. "The fact was, Mr. Burgess, that I didn't really care for him. I know he's very good and all that, and of course Aunt Stanbury meant it all for the best. And I would have done it if I could, but I couldn't." Brooke patted her on the back,—not in the flesh but in the spirit,—and told her that she was quite right. And he expressed an opinion too that it was not expedient to yield too much to Aunt Stanbury. "I would yield to her in anything that was possible to me," said Dorothy. "I won't," said he; "and I don't think I should do any good if I did. I like her, and I like her money. But I don't like either well enough to sell myself for a price."

A great part too of the quarrelling which went on from day to day between Brooke and Miss Stanbury was due to the difference of their opinions respecting Dorothy and her suitor. "I believe you put her up to it," said Aunt Stanbury.

"I neither put her up nor down, but I think that she was quite right."

"You've robbed her of a husband, and she'll never have another chance. After what you've done you ought to take her yourself."

"I shall be ready to-morrow," said Brooke.

"How can you tell such a lie?" said Aunt Stanbury.

But after two or three days Brooke was gone to

make a journey through the distant parts of the county, and see the beauties of Devonshire. He was to be away for a fortnight, and then come back for a day or two before he returned to London. During that fortnight things did not go well with poor Dorothy at Exeter.

"I suppose you know your own business best," her aunt said to her one morning. Dorothy uttered no word of reply. She felt it to be equally impossible to suggest either that she did or that she did not know her own business best. "There may be reasons which I don't understand," exclaimed Aunt Stanbury; "but I should like to know what it is you expect."

"Why should I expect anything, Aunt Stanbury?"

"That's nonsense. Everybody expects something. You expect to have your dinner by-and-by,—don't you?"

"I suppose I shall," said Dorothy, to whom it occurred at the moment that such expectation was justified by the fact that on every day of her life hitherto some sort of a dinner had come in her way.

"Yes,—and you think it comes from heaven, I suppose."

"It comes by God's goodness, and your bounty, Aunt Stanbury."

"And how will it come when I'm dead? Or how will it come if things should go in such a way that I can't stay here any longer? You don't ever think of that."

"I should go back to mamma, and Priscilla."

"Psha! As if two mouths were not enough to eat all the meal there is in that tub. If there was a word to say against the man, I wouldn't ask you to have

him; if he drank or smoked, or wasn't a gentleman, or was too poor, or anything you like. But there's nothing. It's all very well to tell me you don't love him, but why don't you love him? I don't like a girl to go and throw herself at a man's head, as those Frenches have done; but when everything has been prepared for you and made proper, it seems to me to be like turning away from good victuals." Dorothy could only offer to go home if she had offended her aunt, and then Miss Stanbury scolded her for making the offer. As this kind of thing went on at the house in the Close for a fortnight, during which there was no going out, and no society at home, Dorothy began to be rather tired of it.

At the end of the fortnight, on the morning of the day on which Brooke Burgess was expected back, Dorothy, slowly moving into the sitting room with her usual melancholy air, found Mr. Gibson talking to her aunt. "There she is herself," said Miss Stanbury, jumping up briskly; "and now you can speak to her. Of course I have no authority,—none in the least. But she knows what my wishes are." And, having so spoken, Miss Stanbury left the room.

It will be remembered that hitherto no word of affection had been whispered by Mr. Gibson into Dorothy's ears. When he came before to press his suit she had been made aware of his coming, and had fled, leaving her answer with her aunt. Mr. Gibson had then expressed himself as somewhat injured in that no opportunity of pouring forth his own eloquence had been permitted to him. On that occasion Miss Stanbury, being in a snubbing humour, had snubbed him. She had in truth scolded him almost as much as she

had scolded Dorothy, telling him that he went about the business in hand as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. "You're stiff as a chair-back," she had said to him, with a few other compliments, and these amenities had for awhile made him regard the establishment at Heavitree as being, at any rate, pleasanter than that in the Close. But since that cool reflection had come. The proposal was not that he should marry Miss Stanbury, senior, who certainly could be severe on occasions, but Miss Stanbury, junior, whose temper was as sweet as primroses in March. That which he would have to take from Miss Stanbury, senior, was a certain sum of money, as to which her promise was as good as any bond in the world. Things had come to such a pass with him in Exeter,—from the hints of his friend the Prebend, from a word or two which had come to him from the Dean, from certain family arrangements proposed to him by his mother and sisters, —things had come to such a pass that he was of a mind that he had better marry some one. He had, as it were, three strings to his bow. There were the two French strings, and there was Dorothy. He had not breadth of genius enough to suggest to himself that yet another woman might be found. There was a difficulty on the French score even about Miss Stanbury; but it was clear to him that, failing her, he was due to one of the two Miss Frenches. Now it was not only that the Miss Frenches were empty-handed, but he was beginning to think himself that they were not as nice as they might have been in reference to the arrangement of their head gear. Therefore, having given much thought to the matter, and remembering that he had never yet had play for his own eloquence with Dorothy,

he had come to Miss Stanbury asking that he might have another chance. It had been borne in upon him that he had perhaps hitherto regarded Dorothy as too certainly his own, since she had been offered to him by her aunt,—as being a prize that required no eloquence in the winning; and he thought that if he could have an opportunity of amending that fault, it might even yet be well with his suit. So he prepared himself, and asked permission, and now found himself alone with the young lady.

"When last I was in this house, Miss Stanbury," he began, "I was not fortunate enough to be allowed an opportunity of pleading my cause to yourself." Then he paused, and Dorothy was left to consider how best she might answer him. All that her aunt had said to her had not been thrown away upon her. The calls upon that slender meal-tub at home she knew were quite sufficient. And Mr. Gibson was, she believed, a good man. And how better could she dispose of herself in life? And what was she that she should scorn the love of an honest gentleman? She would take him, she thought,—if she could. But then there came upon her, unconsciously, without work of thought, by instinct rather than by intelligence, a feeling of the closeness of a wife to her husband. Looking at it in general she could not deny that it would be very proper that she should become Mrs. Gibson. But when there came upon her a remembrance that she would be called upon for demonstration of her love,—that he would embrace her, and hold her to his heart, and kiss her,—she revolted and shuddered. She believed that she did not want to marry any man, and that such a state of things would not be good for her. "Dear young lady," con-

tinued Mr. Gibson, "you will let me now make up for the loss which I then experienced?"

"I thought it was better not to give you trouble," said Dorothy.

"Trouble, Miss Stanbury! How could it be trouble? The labour we delight in physics pain. But to go back to the subject-matter. I hope you do not doubt that my affection for you is true, and honest, and genuine."

"I don't want to doubt anything, Mr. Gibson; but——"

"You needn't, dearest Miss Stanbury; indeed you needn't. If you could read my heart you would see written there true love very plainly;—very plainly. And do you not think it a duty that people should marry?" It may be surmised that he had here forgotten some connecting link which should have joined without abruptness the declaration of his own love, and his social view as to the general expediency of matrimony. But Dorothy did not discover the hiatus.

"Certainly,—when they like each other, and if their friends think it proper."

"Our friends think it proper, Miss Stanbury,—may I say Dorothy?—all of them. I can assure you that on my side you will be welcomed by a mother and sisters only too anxious to receive you with open arms. And as regards your own relations, I need hardly allude to your revered aunt. As to your own mother and sister,—and your brother, who, I believe, gives his mind chiefly to other things,—I am assured by Miss Stanbury that no opposition need be feared from them. Is that true, dearest Dorothy?"

"It is true."

"Does not all that plead in my behalf? Tell me, Dorothy."

"Of course it does."

"And you will be mine?" As far as eloquence could be of service, Mr. Gibson was sufficiently eloquent. To Dorothy his words appeared good, and true, and affecting. All their friends did wish it. There were many reasons why it should be done. If talking could have done it, his talking was good enough. Though his words were in truth cold, and affected, and learned by rote, they did not offend her; but his face offended her; and the feeling was strong within her that if she yielded, it would soon be close to her own. She couldn't do it. She didn't love him, and she wouldn't do it. Priscilla would not grudge her her share out of that meagre meal-tub. Had not Priscilla told her not to marry the man if she did not love him? She found that she was further than ever from loving him. She would not do it. "Say that you will be mine," pleaded Mr. Gibson, coming to her with both his hands outstretched.

"Mr. Gibson, I can't," she said. She was sobbing now, and was half choked by tears.

"And why not, Dorothy?"

"I don't know, but I can't. I don't feel that I want to be married at all."

"But it is honourable."

"It's no use, Mr. Gibson; I can't, and you oughtn't to ask me any more."

"Must this be your very last answer?"

"What's the good of going over it all again and again. I can't do it."

"Never, Miss Stanbury?"

"No;—never."

"That is cruel, very cruel. I fear that you doubt my love."

"It isn't cruel, Mr. Gibson. I have a right to have my own feelings, and I can't. If you please, I'll go away now." Then she went, and he was left standing alone in the room. His first feeling was one of anger. Then there came to be mixed with that a good deal of wonder,—and then a certain amount of doubt. He had during the last fortnight discussed the matter at great length with a friend, a gentleman who knew the world, and who took upon himself to say that he specially understood female nature. It was by advice from this friend that he had been instigated to plead his own cause. "Of course she means to accept you," the friend had said. "Why the mischief shouldn't she? But she has some flimsy, old-fashioned country idea that it isn't maidenly to give in at first. You tell her roundly that she must marry you." Mr. Gibson was just reaching that roundness which his friend had recommended when the lady left him and he was alone.

Mr. Gibson was no doubt very much in love with Dorothy Stanbury. So much, we may take for granted. He, at least, believed that he was in love with her. He would have thought it wicked to propose to her had he not been in love with her. But with his love was mingled a certain amount of contempt which had induced him to look upon her as an easy conquest. He had been perhaps a little ashamed of himself for being in love with Dorothy, and had almost believed the Frenches when they had spoken of her as a poor creature, a dependant, one born to be snubbed,—as a young woman almost without an identity of her own.

When, therefore, she so pertinaciously refused him, he could not but be angry. And it was natural that he should be surprised. Though he was to have received a fortune with Dorothy, the money was not hers. It was to be hers,—or rather theirs,—only if she would accept him. Mr. Gibson thoroughly understood this point. He knew that Dorothy had nothing of her own. The proposal made to her was as rich as though he had sought her down at Nuncombe Putney, with his preferment, plus the £2000, in his own pocket. And his other advantages were not hidden from his own eyes. He was a clergyman, well thought of, not bad-looking certainly, considerably under forty,—a man, indeed, who ought to have been, in the eyes of Dorothy, such an Orlando as she would have most desired. He could not therefore but wonder. And then came the doubt. Could it be possible that all those refusals were simply the early pulses of hesitating compliance produced by maidenly reserve? Mr. Gibson's friend had expressed a strong opinion that almost any young woman would accept any young man if he put his "com 'ether" upon her strong enough. For Mr. Gibson's friend was an Irishman. As to Dorothy the friend had not a doubt in the world. Mr. Gibson, as he stood alone in the room after Dorothy's departure, could not share his friend's certainty; but he thought it just possible that the pulsations of maidenly reserve were yet at work. As he was revolving these points in his mind, Miss Stanbury entered the room.

"It's all over now," she said.

"As how, Miss Stanbury?"

"As how! She's given you an answer; hasn't she?"

"Yes, Miss Stanbury, she has given me an answer. But it has occurred to me that young ladies are sometimes,—perhaps a little——"

"She means it, Mr. Gibson; you may take my word for that. She is quite in earnest. She can take the bit between her teeth as well as another, though she does look so mild and gentle. She's a Stanbury all over."

"And must this be the last of it, Miss Stanbury?"

"Upon my word, I don't know what else you can do,—unless you send the Dean and Chapter to talk her over. She's a pig-headed, foolish young woman;—but I can't help that. The truth is, you didn't make enough of her at first, Mr. Gibson. You thought the plum would tumble into your mouth."

This did seem cruel to the poor man. From the first day in which the project had been opened to him by Miss Stanbury, he had yielded a ready acquiescence,—in spite of those ties which he had at Heavitree,—and had done his very best to fall into her views. "I don't think that is at all fair, Miss Stanbury," he said, with some tone of wrath in his voice.

"It's true,—quite true. You always treated her as though she were something beneath you." Mr. Gibson stood speechless, with his mouth open. "So you did. I saw it all. And now she's had spirit enough to resent it. I don't wonder at it; I don't, indeed. It's no good your standing there any longer. The thing is done."

Such intolerable ill-usage Mr. Gibson had never suffered in his life. Had he been untrue, or very nearly untrue, to those dear girls at Heavitree for this?

"I never treated her as anything beneath me," he said at last.

"Yes, you did. Do you think that I don't understand? Haven't I eyes in my head, and ears? I'm not deaf yet, nor blind. But there's an end of it. If any young woman ever meant anything, she means it. The truth is, she don't like you."

Was ever a lover despatched in so uncourteous a way! Then, too, he had been summoned thither as a lover, had been specially encouraged to come there as a lover, had been assured of success in a peculiar way, had had the plum actually offered to him! He had done all that this old woman had bidden him,—something, indeed, to the prejudice of his own heart; he had been told that the wife was ready for him; and now, because this foolish young woman didn't know her own mind,—this was Mr. Gibson's view of the matter,—he was reviled and abused, and told that he had behaved badly to the lady. "Miss Stanbury," he said, "I think that you are forgetting yourself."

"Highty, tighty!" said Miss Stanbury. "Forgetting myself! I shan't forget you in a hurry, Mr. Gibson."

"Nor I you, Miss Stanbury. Good morning, Miss Stanbury." Mr. Gibson, as he went from the hall-door into the street, shook the dust off his feet, and resolved that for the future he and Miss Stanbury should be two. There would arise great trouble in Exeter; but, nevertheless, he and Miss Stanbury must be two. He could justify himself in no other purpose after such conduct as he had received.

CHAPTER XI.

Laburnum Cottage.

THERE had been various letters passing, during the last six weeks, between Priscilla Stanbury and her brother, respecting the Clock House at Nuncombe Putney. The ladies at Nuncombe had, certainly, gone into the Clock House on the clear understanding that the expenses of the establishment were to be incurred on behalf of Mrs. Trevelyan. Priscilla had assented to the movement most doubtingly. She had disliked the idea of taking the charge of a young married woman who was separated from her husband, and she had felt that a going down after such an uprising,—a fall from the Clock House back to a cottage,—would be very disagreeable. She had, however, allowed her brother's arguments to prevail, and there they were. The annoyance which she had anticipated from the position of their late guest had fallen upon them: it had been felt grievously, from the moment in which Colonel Osborne called at the house; and now that going back to the cottage must be endured. Priscilla understood that there had been a settlement between Trevelyan and Stanbury as to the cost of the establishment so far;—but that must now be at an end. In their present circumstances, she would not continue to live there, and had already made inquiries as to some humble roof for their shelter. For herself she would not have cared had it been necessary for her to hide herself in a hut,—for herself, as regarded any feeling as to her own standing in the village. For herself, she was ashamed of nothing. But her mother would suffer, and she

knew what Aunt Stanbury would say to Dorothy. To Dorothy at the present moment, if Dorothy should think of accepting her suitor, the change might be very deleterious; but still it should be made. She could not endure to live there on the very hard-earned proceeds of her brother's pen,—proceeds which were not only hard-earned, but precarious. She gave warning to the two servants who had been hired, and consulted with Mrs. Crocket as to a cottage, and was careful to let it be known throughout Nuncombe Putney that the Clock House was to be abandoned. The Clock House had been taken furnished for six months, of which half were not yet over; but there were other expenses of living there much greater than the rent, and go she would. Her mother sighed and assented; and Mrs. Crocket, having strongly but fruitlessly advised that the Clock House should be inhabited at any rate for the six months, promised her assistance. "It has been a bad business, Mrs. Crocket," said Priscilla; "and all we can do now is to get out of it as well as we can. Every mouthful I eat chokes me while I stay there." "It ain't good, certainly, miss, not to know as you're all straight the first thing as you wakes in the morning," said Mrs. Crocket,—who was always able to feel when she woke that everything was straight with her.

Then there came the correspondence between Priscilla and Hugh. Priscilla was at first decided, indeed, but mild in the expression of her decision. To this, and to one or two other missives couched in terms of increasing decision, Hugh answered with manly, self-asserting, overbearing arguments. The house was theirs till Christmas; between this and then he would think about it. He could very well afford to keep the house

on till next Midsummer, and then they might see what had best be done. There was plenty of money, and Priscilla need not put herself into a flutter. In answer to that word flutter, Priscilla wrote as follows;—

"Clock House, September 16, 186—.

"DEAR HUGH,

"I know very well how good you are, and how generous, but you must allow me to have feelings as well as yourself. I will not consent to have myself regarded as a grand lady out of your earnings. How should I feel when some day I heard that you had run yourself into debt? Neither mamma nor I could endure it. Dorothy is provided for now, at any rate for a time, and what we have is enough for us. You know I am not too proud to take anything you can spare to us, when we are ourselves placed in a proper position; but I could not live in this great house, while you are paying for everything,—and I will not. Mamma quite agrees with me, and we shall go out of it on Michaelmas-day. Mrs. Crocket says she thinks she can get you a tenant for the three months, out of Exeter,—if not for the whole rent, at least for part of it. I think we have already got a small place for eight shillings a week, a little out of the village, on the road to Cockchaffington. You will remember it. Old Soames used to live there. Our old furniture will be just enough. There is a mite of a garden, and Mrs. Crocket says she thinks we can get it for seven shillings, or perhaps for six and sixpence, if we stay there. We shall go in on the 29th. Mrs. Crocket will see about having somebody to take care of the house.

"Your most affectionate sister,

"PRISCILLA."

On the receipt of this letter, Hugh proceeded to Nuncombe. At this time he was making about ten guineas a week, and thought that he saw his way to further work. No doubt the ten guineas were precarious;—that is, the "Daily Record" might discontinue his services to-morrow, if the "Daily Record" thought fit to do so. The greater part of his earnings came from the "D. R.," and the editor had only to say that things did not suit any longer, and there would be an end of it. He was not as a lawyer or a doctor with many clients who could not all be supposed to withdraw their custom at once; but leading articles were things wanted with at least as much regularity as physic or law; and Hugh Stanbury, believing in himself, did not think it probable that an editor, who knew what he was about, would withdraw his patronage. He was proud of his weekly ten guineas, feeling sure that a weekly ten guineas would not as yet have been his had he stuck to the Bar as a profession. He had calculated, when Mrs. Trevelyan left the Clock House, that two hundred a year would enable his mother to continue to reside there, the rent of the place furnished, or half-furnished, being only eighty; and he thought that he could pay the two hundred easily. He thought so still, when he received Priscilla's last letter; but he knew something of the stubbornness of his dear sister, and he, therefore, went down to Nuncombe Putney, in order that he might use the violence of his logic on his mother.

He had heard of Mr. Gibson from both Priscilla and from Dorothy, and was certainly desirous that "dear old Dolly," as he called her, should be settled comfortably. But when dear old Dolly wrote to him

declaring that it could not be so, that Mr. Gibson was a very nice gentleman, of whom she could not say that she was particularly fond,—"though I really do think that he is an excellent man, and if it was any other girl in the world, I should recommend her to take him,"—and that she thought that she would rather not get married, he wrote to her the kindest brotherly letter in the world, telling her that she was "a brick," and suggesting to her that there might come some day some one who would suit her taste better than Mr. Gibson. "I'm not very fond of parsons myself," said Hugh, "but you must not tell that to Aunt Stanbury." Then he suggested that as he was going down to Nuncombe, Dorothy should get leave of absence and come over and meet him at the Clock House. Dorothy demanded the leave of absence somewhat imperiously, and was at home at the Clock House when Hugh arrived.

"And so that little affair couldn't come off?" said Hugh at their first family meeting.

"It was a pity," said Mrs. Stanbury, plaintively. She had been very plaintive on the subject. What a thing it would have been for her, could she have seen Dorothy so well established!

"There's no help for spilt milk, mother," said Hugh. Mrs. Stanbury shook her head.

"Dorothy was quite right," said Priscilla.

"Of course she was right," said Hugh. "Who doubts her being right? Bless my soul! What's any girl to do if she don't like a man except to tell him to? I honour you, Dolly,—not that I ever should have doubted you. You're too much of a chip of the old block to say you liked a man when you didn't."

"He is a very excellent young man," said Mrs. Stanbury.

"An excellent fiddlestick, mother. Loving and liking don't go by excellence. Besides, I don't know about his being any better than anybody else, just because he's a clergyman."

"A clergyman is more likely to be steady than other men," said the mother.

"Steady, yes; and as selfish as you please."

"Your father was a clergyman, Hugh."

"I don't mean to say that they are not as good as others; but I won't have it that they are better. They are always dealing with the Bible, till they think themselves apostles. But when money comes up, or comfort, or, for the matter of that either, a pretty woman with a little money, then they are as human as the rest of us."

If the truth had been told on that occasion, Hugh Stanbury would have had to own that he had written lately two or three rather stinging articles in the "Daily Record," as "to the assumed merits and actual demerits of the clergy of the Church of England." It is astonishing how fluent a man is on a subject when he has lately delivered himself respecting it in this fashion.

Nothing on that evening was said about the Clock House, or about Priscilla's intentions. Priscilla was up early on the next morning, intending to discuss it in the garden with Hugh before breakfast; but Hugh was aware of her purpose and avoided her. It was his intention to speak first to his mother; and though his mother was, as he knew, very much in awe of her daughter, he thought that he might carry his point, at

any rate for the next three months, by forcing an assent from the elder lady. So he managed to waylay Mrs. Stanbury before she descended to the parlour.

"We can't afford it, my dear;—indeed we can't," said Mrs. Stanbury.

"That's not the question, mother. The rent must be paid up to Christmas, and you can live here as cheap as you can anywhere."

"But Priscilla——"

"Oh, Priscilla! Of course we know what Priscilla says. Priscilla has been writing to me about it in the most sensible manner in the world; but what does it all come to? If you are ashamed of taking assistance from me, I don't know who is to do anything for anybody. You are comfortable here?"

"Very comfortable; only Priscilla feels——"

"Priscilla is a tyrant mother; and a very stern one. Just make up your mind to stay here till Christmas. If I tell you that I can afford it, surely that ought to be enough." Then Dorothy entered the room, and Hugh appealed to her. Dorothy had come to Nuncombe only on the day before, and had not been consulted on the subject. She had been told that the Clock House was to be abandoned, and had been taken down to inspect the cottage in which old Soames had lived;—but her opinion had not been asked. Priscilla had quite made up her mind, and why should she ask an opinion of any one? But now Dorothy's opinion was demanded. "It's what I call the rhodomontade of independence," said Hugh.

"I suppose it is very expensive," suggested Dorothy.

"The house must be paid for," said Hugh;—"and

if I say that I've got the money, is not that enough? A miserable, dirty little place, where you'll catch your death of lumbago, mother."

"Of course it's not a comfortable house," said Mrs. Stanbury,—who, of herself, was not at all indifferent to the comforts of her present residence.

"And it is very dirty," said Dorothy.

"The nastiest place I ever saw in my life. Come, mother; if I say that I can afford it, ought not that to be enough for you? If you think you can't trust me, there's an end of everything, you know." And Hugh, as he thus expressed himself, assumed an air of injured virtue.

Mrs. Stanbury had very nearly yielded, when Priscilla came in among them. It was impossible not to continue the conversation, though Hugh would much have preferred to have forced an assent from his mother before he opened his mouth on the subject to his sister. "My mother agrees with me," said he abruptly, "and so does Dolly, that it will be absurd to move away from this house at present."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Priscilla.

"I don't think I said that, Hugh," murmured Dorothy, softly.

"I am sure I don't want anything for myself," said Mrs. Stanbury.

"It's I that want it," said Hugh. "And I think that I've a right to have my wishes respected, so far as that goes."

"My dear Hugh," said Priscilla, "the cottage is already taken, and we shall certainly go into it. I spoke to Mrs. Crocket yesterday about a cart for moving the things. I'm sure mamma agrees with me.

What possible business can people have to live in such a house as this with about twenty-four shillings a week for every thing? I won't do it. And as the thing is settled, it is only making trouble to disturb it."

"I suppose, Priscilla," said Hugh, "you'll do as your mother chooses?"

"Mamma chooses to go. She has told me so already."

"You have talked her into it."

"We had better go, Hugh," said Mrs. Stanbury. "I'm sure we had better go."

"Of course we shall go," said Priscilla. "Hugh is very kind and very generous, but he is only giving trouble for nothing about this. Had we not better go down to breakfast?"

And so Priscilla carried the day. They went down to breakfast, and during the meal Hugh would speak to nobody. When the gloomy meal was over he took his pipe and walked out to the cottage. It was an untidy-looking, rickety place, small and desolate, with a pretension about it of the lowest order, a pretension that was evidently ashamed of itself. There was a porch. And the one sitting-room had what the late Mr. Soames had always called his bow window. But the porch looked as though it were tumbling down, and the bow window looked as though it were tumbling out. The parlour and the bedroom over it had been papered;—but the paper was torn and soiled, and in sundry places was hanging loose. There was a miserable little room called a kitchen to the right as you entered the door, in which the grate was worn out, and behind this was a shed with a copper. In the garden there remained the stumps and stalks of

Mr. Soames's cabbages, and there were weeds in plenty, and a damp hole among some elder bushes called an arbour. It was named Laburnum Cottage, from a shrub that grew at the end of the house. Hugh Stanbury shuddered as he stood smoking among the cabbage-stalks. How could a man ask such a girl as Nora Rowley to be his wife, whose mother lived in a place like this? While he was still standing in the garden, and thinking of Priscilla's obstinacy and his own ten guineas a week, and the sort of life which he lived in London,—where he dined usually at his club, and denied himself nothing in the way of pipes, beer, and beefsteaks, he heard a step behind him, and turning round, saw his elder sister.

"Hugh", she said, "you must not be angry with me."

"But I am angry with you."

"I know you are; but you are unjust. I am doing what I am sure is right."

"I never saw such a beastly hole as this in all my life."

"I don't think it beastly at all. You'll find that I'll make it nice. Whatever we want here you shall give us. You are not to think that I am too proud to take anything at your hands. It is not that."

"It's very like it."

"I have never refused anything that is reasonable, but it is quite unreasonable that we should go on living in such a place as that, as though we had three or four hundred a year of our own. If mamma got used to the comfort of it, it would be hard then upon her to move. You shall give her what you can afford, and what is reasonable; but it is madness to think of living there. I couldn't do it."

"You're to have your way at any rate, it seems."

"But you must not quarrel with me, Hugh. Give me a kiss. I don't have you often with me; and yet you are the only man in the world that I ever speak to, or even know. I sometimes half think that the bread is so hard and the water so bitter, that life will become impossible. I try to get over it; but if you were to go away from me in anger, I should be so beaten for a week or two that I could do nothing."

"Why won't you let me do anything?"

"I will;—whatever you please. But kiss me." Then he kissed her, as he stood among Mr. Soames's cabbage-stalks. "Dear Hugh; you are such a god to me!"

"You don't treat me like a divinity."

"But I think of you as one when you are absent. The gods were never obeyed when they showed themselves. Let us go and have a walk. Come;—shall we get as far as Ridleigh Mill?" Then they started together, and all unpleasantness was over between them when they returned to the Clock House.

CHAPTER XII.

Brooke Burgess takes Leave of Exeter.

THE time had arrived at which Brooke Burgess was to leave Exeter. He had made his tour through the county, and returned to spend his two last nights at Miss Stanbury's house. When he came back Dorothy was still at Nuncombe, but she arrived in the Close the day before his departure. Her mother and sister had wished her to stay at Nuncombe. "There is a bed for you now, and a place to be comfortable in,"

Priscilla had said, laughing, "and you may as well see the last of us." But Dorothy declared that she had named a day to her aunt, and that she would not break her engagement. "I suppose you can stay if you like," Priscilla had urged. But Dorothy was of opinion that she ought not to stay. She said not a word about Brooke Burgess; but it may be that it would have been matter of regret to her not to shake hands with him once more. Brooke declared to her that had she not come back he would have gone over to Nuncombe to see her; but Dorothy did not consider herself entitled to believe that.

On the morning of the last day Brooke went over to his uncle's office. "I've come to say Good-bye, Uncle Barty," he said.

"Good-bye, my boy. Take care of yourself."

"I mean to try."

"You haven't quarrelled with the old woman,——have you?" said Uncle Barty.

"Not yet;—that is to say, not to the knife."

"And you still believe that you are to have her money?"

"I believe nothing one way or the other. You may be sure of this,—I shall never count it mine till I've got it; and I shall never make myself so sure of it as to break my heart because I don't get it. I suppose I've got as good a right to it as anybody else, and I don't see why I shouldn't take it if it come in my way."

"I don't think it ever will," said the old man, after a pause.

"I shall be none the worse," said Brooke.

"Yes, you will. You'll be a broken-hearted man

And she means to break your heart. She does it on purpose. She has no more idea of leaving you her money than I have. Why should she?"

"Simply because she takes the fancy."

"Fancy! Believe me, there is very little fancy about it. There isn't one of the name she wouldn't ruin if she could. She'd break all our hearts if she could get at them. Look at me and my position. I'm little more than a clerk in the concern. By-God;—I'm not so well off as a senior clerk in many a bank. If there came a bad time, I must lose as the others would lose;—but a clerk never loses. And my share in the business is almost a nothing. It's just nothing,—compared to what it would have been, only for her."

Brooke had known that his uncle was a disappointed, or at least a discontented man; but he had never known much of the old man's circumstances, and certainly had not expected to hear him speak in the strain that he had now used. He had heard often that his Uncle Barty disliked Miss Stanbury, and had not been surprised at former sharp, biting little words spoken in reference to that lady's character. But he had not expected such a tirade of abuse as the banker had now poured out. "Of course I know nothing about the bank," said he; "but I did not suppose that she had had anything to do with it."

"Where do you think the money came from that she has got? Did you ever hear that she had anything of her own? She never had a penny,—never a penny. It came out of this house. It is the capital on which this business was founded, and on which it ought to be carried on to this day. My brother had

thrown her off; by heavens, yes;—had thrown her off. He had found out what she was, and had got rid of her."

"But he left her his money."

"Yes;—she got near him when he was dying, and he did leave her his money;—his money, and my money, and your father's money."

"He could have given her nothing, Uncle Barty, that wasn't his own."

"Of course that's true;—it's true in one way. You might say the same of a man who was cozened into leaving every shilling away from his own children. I wasn't in Exeter when the will was made. We none of us were here. But she was here; and when we came to see him die, there we found her. She had had her revenge upon him, and she means to have it on all of us. I don't believe she'll ever leave you a shilling, Brooke. You'll find her out yet, and you'll talk of her to your nephews as I do to you."

Brooke made some ordinary answer to this, and bade his uncle adieu. He had allowed himself to entertain a half chivalrous idea that he could produce a reconciliation between Miss Stanbury and his uncle Barty; and since he had been at Exeter he had said a word, first to the one and then to the other, hinting at the subject;—but his hints had certainly not been successful. As he walked from the bank into the High Street he could not fail to ask himself whether there were any grounds for the terrible accusations which he had just heard from his uncle's lips. Something of the same kind, though in form much less violent, had been repeated to him very often by others of the family. Though he had as a boy known Miss Stanbury well,

he had been taught to regard her as an ogress. All the Burgesses had regarded Miss Stanbury as an ogress since that unfortunate will had come to light. But she was an ogress from whom something might be gained,—and the ogress had still persisted in saying that a Burgess should be her heir. It had therefore come to pass that Brooke had been brought up half to revere her and half to abhor her. "She is a dreadful woman," said his branch of the family, "who will not scruple at anything evil. But as it seems that you may probably reap the advantage of the evil that she does, it will become you to put up with her iniquity." As he had become old enough to understand the nature of her position, he had determined to judge for himself; but his judgment hitherto simply amounted to this,—that Miss Stanbury was a very singular old woman, with a kind heart and good instincts, but so capricious withal that no sensible man would risk his happiness on expectations formed on her promises. Guided by this opinion, he had resolved to be attentive to her and, after a certain fashion, submissive; but certainly not to become her slave. She had thrown over her nephew. She was constantly complaining to him of her niece. Now and again she would say a very bitter word to him about himself. When he had left Exeter on his little excursion, no one was so much in favour with her as Mr. Gibson. On his return he found that Mr. Gibson had been altogether discarded, and was spoken of in terms of almost insolent abuse. "If I were ever so humble to her," he had said to himself, "it would do no good; and there is nothing I hate so much as humility." He had thus determined to take the goods the gods provided, should it ever come to

pass that such godlike provision was laid before him out of Miss Stanbury's coffers;—but not to alter his mode of life or put himself out of his way in obedience to her behests, as a man might be expected to do who was destined to receive so rich a legacy. Upon this idea he had acted, still believing the old woman to be good, but believing at the same time that she was very capricious. Now he had heard what his Uncle Bartholomew Burgess had had to say upon the matter, and he could not refrain from asking himself whether his uncle's accusations were true.

In a narrow passage between the High Street and the Close he met Mr. Gibson. There had come to be that sort of intimacy between the two men which grows from closeness of position rather than from any social desire on either side, and it was natural that Burgess should say a word of farewell. On the previous evening Miss Stanbury had relieved her mind by turning Mr. Gibson into ridicule in her description to Brooke of the manner in which the clergyman had carried on his love affair; and she had at the same time declared that Mr. Gibson had been most violently impertinent to herself. He knew, therefore, that Miss Stanbury and Mr. Gibson had become two, and would on this occasion have passed on without a word relative to the old lady had Mr. Gibson allowed him to do so. But Mr. Gibson spoke his mind freely.

"Off to-morrow, are you?" he said. "Good-bye. I hope we may meet again; but not in the same house, Mr. Burgess."

"There or anywhere I shall be very happy," said Brooke.

"Not there, certainly. While you were absent Miss

Stanbury treated me in such a way that I shall certainly never put my foot in her house again."

"Dear me! I thought that you and she were such great friends."

"I knew her very well, of course;—and respected her. She is a good churchwoman, and is charitable in the city; but she has got such a tongue in her head that there is no bearing it when she does what she calls giving you a bit of her mind."

"She has been indulgent to me, and has not given me much of it."

"Your time will come, I've no doubt," continued Mr. Gibson. "Every body has always told me that it would be so. Even her oldest friends knew it. You ask Mrs. MacHugh, or Mrs. French, at Heavitree."

"Mrs. French!" said Brooke, laughing. "That would hardly be fair evidence."

"Why not? I don't know a better judge of character in all Exeter than Mrs. French. And she and Miss Stanbury have been intimate all their lives. Ask your uncle at the bank."

"My uncle and Miss Stanbury never were friends," said Brooke.

"Ask Hugh Stanbury what he thinks of her. But don't suppose I want to say a word against her. I wouldn't for the world do such a thing. Only, as we've met there and all that, I thought it best to let you know that she had treated me in such a way, and has been altogether so violent, that I never will go there again." So saying, Mr. Gibson passed on, and was of opinion that he had spoken with great generosity of the old woman who had treated him so badly.

In the afternoon Brooke Burgess went over to the

further end of the Close, and called on Mrs. MacHugh; and from thence he walked across to Heavitree, and called on the Frenches. It may be doubted whether he would have been so well behaved to these ladies had they not been appealed to by Mr. Gibson as witnesses to the character of Miss Stanbury. He got very little from Mrs. MacHugh. That lady was kind and cordial, and expressed many wishes that she might see him again in Exeter. When he said a few words about Mr. Gibson, Mrs. MacHugh only laughed, and declared that the gentleman would soon find a plaister for that sore. "There are more fishes than one in the sea," she said.

"But I'm afraid they've quarrelled, Mrs. MacHugh."

"So they tell me. What should we have to talk about here if somebody didn't quarrel sometimes? She and I ought to get up a quarrel for the good of the public;—only they know that I never can quarrel with anybody. I never see anybody interesting enough to quarrel with." But Mrs. MacHugh said nothing about Miss Stanbury, except that she sent over a message with reference to a rubber of whist for the next night but one.

He found the two French girls sitting with their mother, and they all expressed their great gratitude to him for coming to say good-bye before he went. "It is so very nice of you, Mr. Burgess," said Camilla, "and particularly just at present."

"Yes, indeed," said Arabella, "because you know things have been so unpleasant."

"My dears, never mind about that," said Mrs. French. "Miss Stanbury has meant everything for the best, and it is all over now."

"I don't know what you mean by its being all over, mamma," said Camilla. "As far as I can understand, it has never been begun."

"My dear, the least said the soonest mended," said Mrs. French.

"That's of course, mamma," said Camilla; "but yet one can't hold one's tongue altogether. All the city is talking about it, and I dare say Mr. Burgess has heard as much as anybody else."

"I've heard nothing at all," said Brooke.

"Oh yes, you have," continued Camilla. Arabella conceived herself at this moment to be situated in so delicate a position, that it was best that her sister should talk about it, and that she herself should hold her tongue,—with the exception, perhaps, of a hint here and there which might be of assistance; for Arabella completely understood that the prize was now to be hers, if the prize could be rescued out of the Stanbury clutches. She was aware,—no one better aware,—how her sister had interfered with her early hopes, and was sure, in her own mind, that all her disappointment had come from fratricidal rivalry on the part of Camilla. It had never, however, been open to her to quarrel with Camilla. There they were, linked together, and together they must fight their battles. As two pigs may be seen at the same trough, each striving to take the delicacies of the banquet from the other, and yet enjoying always the warmth of the same dunghill in amicable contiguity, so had these young ladies lived in sisterly friendship, while each was striving to take a husband from the other. They had understood the position, and, though for years back they had talked about Mr. Gibson, they had never

quarrelled; but now, in these latter days of the Stanbury interference, there had come tacitly to be something of an understanding between them that, if any fighting were still possible on the subject, one must be put forward and the other must yield. There had been no spoken agreement, but Arabella quite understood that she was to be put forward. It was for her to take up the running, and to win, if possible, against the Stanbury filly. That was her view, and she was inclined to give Camilla credit for acting in accordance with it with honesty and zeal. She felt, therefore, that her words on the present occasion ought to be few. She sat back in her corner of the sofa, and was intent on her work, and shewed by the pensiveness of her brow that there were thoughts within her bosom of which she was not disposed to speak. "You must have heard a great deal," said Camilla, laughing. "You must know how poor Mr. Gibson has been abused, because he wouldn't——"

"Camilla, don't be foolish," said Mrs. French.

"Because he wouldn't what?" asked Brooke. "What ought he to have done that he didn't do?"

"I don't know anything about ought," said Camilla. "That's a matter of taste altogether."

"I'm the worst hand in the world at a riddle," said Brooke.

"How sly you are," continued Camilla, laughing; "as if dear Aunt Stanbury hadn't confided all her hopes to you."

"Camilla, dear,—don't," said Arabella.

"But when a gentleman is hunted, and can't be caught, I don't think he ought to be abused to his face."

"But who hunted him, and who abused him?" asked Brooke.

"Mind, I don't mean to say a word against Miss Stanbury, Mr. Burgess. We've known her and loved her all our lives;—haven't we, mamma?"

"And respected her," said Arabella.

"Quite so," continued Camilla. "But you know, Mr. Burgess, that she likes her own way."

"I don't know anybody that does not," said Brooke.

"And when she's disappointed, she shows it. There's no doubt she is disappointed now, Mr. Burgess."

"What's the good of going on, Camilla?" said Mrs. French. Arabella sat silent in her corner, with a conscious glow of satisfaction, as she reflected that the joint disappointment of the elder and the younger Miss Stanbury had been caused by a tender remembrance of her own charms. Had not dear Mr. Gibson told her, in the glowing language of truth, that there was nothing further from his thoughts than the idea of taking Dorothy Stanbury for his wife?

"Well, you know," continued Camilla, "I think that when a person makes an attempt, and comes by the worst of it, that person should put up with the defeat, and not say all manner of ill-natured things. Everybody knows that a certain gentleman is very intimate in this house."

"Don't, dear," said Arabella, in a whisper.

"Yes, I shall," said Camilla. "I don't know why people should hold their tongues, when other people talk so loudly. I don't care a bit what anybody says about the gentleman and us. We have known him for ever so many years, and mamma is very fond of him."

"Indeed I am, Camilla," said Mrs. French.

"And for the matter of that, so am I,—very," said Camilla, laughing bravely. "I don't care who knows it."

"Don't be so silly, child," said Arabella. Camilla was certainly doing her best, and Arabella was grateful.

"We don't care what people may say," continued Camilla again. "Of course we heard, as everybody else heard too, that a certain gentleman was to be married to a certain lady. It was nothing to us whether he was married or not."

"Nothing at all," said Arabella.

"We never spoke ill of the young lady. We did not interfere. If the gentleman liked the young lady, he was quite at liberty to marry her, as far as we were concerned. We had been in the habit of seeing him here, almost as a brother, and perhaps we might feel that a connection with that particular young lady would take him from us; but we never hinted so much even as that,—to him or to anyone else. Why should we? It was nothing to us. Now it turns out that the gentleman never meant anything of the kind, whereupon he is pretty nearly kicked out of the house, and all manner of ill-natured things are said about us everywhere." By this time Camilla had become quite excited, and was speaking with much animation.

"How can you be so foolish, Camilla?" said Arabella.

"Perhaps I am foolish," said Camilla, "to care what anybody says."

"What can it all be to Mr. Burgess?" said Mrs. French.

"Only this, that as we all like Mr. Burgess, and as

he is almost one of the family in the Close, I think he ought to know why we are not quite so cordial as we used to be. Now that the matter is over I have no doubt things will get right again. And as for the young lady, I'm sure we feel for her. We think it was the aunt who was indiscreet."

"And then she has such a tongue," said Arabella.

Our friend Brooke, of course, knew the whole truth; —knew the nature of Mr. Gibson's failure, and knew also how Dorothy had acted in the affair. He was inclined, moreover, to believe that the ladies who were now talking to him were as well instructed on the subject as was he himself. He had heard, too, of the ambition of the two young ladies now before him, and believed that that ambition was not yet dead. But he did not think it incumbent on him to fight a battle even on behalf of Dorothy. He might have declared that Dorothy, at least, had not been disappointed, but he thought it better to be silent about Dorothy. "Yes," he said, "Miss Stanbury has a tongue; but I think it speaks as much good as it does evil, and perhaps that is a great deal to say for any lady's tongue."

"We never speak evil of anybody," said Camilla; "never. It is a rule with us." Then Brooke took his leave, and the three ladies were cordial and almost affectionate in their farewell greetings.

Brooke was to start on the following morning before anybody would be up except Martha, and Miss Stanbury was very melancholy during the evening. "We shall miss him very much; shall we not?" she said, appealing to Dorothy. "I am sure you will miss him very much," said Dorothy. "We are so stupid here alone," said Miss Stanbury. When they had

drank their tea, she sat nearly silent for half an hour, and then summoned him up into her own room. "So you are going, Brooke?" she said.

"Yes; I must go now. They would dismiss me if I stayed an hour longer."

"It was good of you come to the old woman; and you must let me hear of you from time to time."

"Of course I'll write."

"And, Brooke,——"

"What is it, Aunt Stanbury?"

"Do you want any money, Brooke?"

"No;—none, thank you. I've plenty for a bachelor."

"When you think of marrying, Brooke, mind you tell me."

"I'll be sure to tell you;—but I can't promise yet when that will be." She said nothing more to him, though she paused once more as though she were going to speak. She kissed him and bade him good-bye, saying that she would not go down-stairs again that evening. He was to tell Dorothy to go to bed. And so they parted.

But Dorothy did not go to bed for an hour after that. When Brooke came down into the parlour with his message she intended to go at once, and put up her work, and lit her candle, and put out her hand to him, and said good-bye to him. But, for all that, she remained there for an hour with him. At first she said very little, but by degrees her tongue was loosened, and she found herself talking with a freedom which she could hardly herself understand. She told him how thoroughly she believed her aunt to be a good woman—how sure she was that her aunt was at any rate honest. "As for me," said Dorothy, " I know

that I have displeased her about Mr. Gibson;—and I would go away, only that I think she would be so desolate." Then Brooke begged her never to allow the idea of leaving Miss Stanbury to enter her head. Because Miss Stanbury was capricious, he said, not on that account should her caprices either be indulged or permitted. That was his doctrine respecting Miss Stanbury, and he declared that, as regarded himself, he would never be either disrespectful to her or submissive. "It is a great mistake," he said, "to think that anybody is either an angel or a devil." When Dorothy expressed an opinion that with some people angelic tendencies were predominant, and with others diabolic tendencies, he assented; but declared that it was not always easy to tell the one tendency from the other. At last, when Dorothy had made about five attempts to go, Mr. Gibson's name was mentioned. "I am very glad that you are not going to be Mrs. Gibson," said he.

"I don't know why you should be glad."

"Because I should not have liked your husband,—not as your husband."

"He is an excellent man, I'm sure," said Dorothy.

"Nevertheless I am very glad. But I did not think you would accept him, and I congratulate you on your escape. You would have been nothing to me as Mrs. Gibson."

"Shouldn't I?" said Dorothy, not knowing what else to say.

"But now I think we shall always be friends."

"I'm sure I hope so, Mr. Burgess. But indeed I ust go now. It is ever so late, and you will hardly ɜt any sleep. Good night." Then he took her hand,

and pressed it very warmly, and referring to a promise before made to her, he assured her that he would certainly make acquaintance with her brother as soon as he was back in London. Dorothy, as she went up to bed, was more than ever satisfied with herself, in that she had not yielded in reference to Mr. Gibson.

CHAPTER XIII.

Trevelyan at Venice.

Trevelyan passed on moodily and alone from Turin to Venice, always expecting letters from Bozzle, and receiving from time to time the dispatches which that functionary forwarded to him, as must be acknowledged, with great punctuality. For Mr. Bozzle did his work, not only with a conscience, but with a will. He was now, as he had declared more than once, altogether devoted to Mr. Trevelyan's interest; and as he was an active, enterprising man, always on the alert to be doing something, and as he loved the work of writing dispatches, Trevelyan received a great many letters from Bozzle. It is not exaggeration to say that every letter made him for the time a very wretched man. This ex-policeman wrote of the wife of his bosom,—of her who had been the wife of his bosom, and who was the mother of his child, who was at this very time the only woman whom he loved,—with an entire absence of delicacy. Bozzle would have thought reticence on his part to be dishonest. We remember Othello's demand of Iago. That was the deman which Bozzle understood that Trevelyan had made him, and he was minded to obey that order. Bu Trevelyan, though he had in truth given the orde

was like Othello also in this,—that he would have preferred before all the prizes of the world to have had proof brought home to him exactly opposite to that which he demanded. But there was nothing so terrible to him as the grinding suspicion that he was to be kept in the dark. Bozzle could find out facts. Therefore he gave, in effect, the same order that Othello gave;—and Bozzle went to work determined to obey it. There came many dispatches to Venice, and at last there came one, which created a correspondence which shall be given here at length. The first is a letter from Mr. Bozzle to his employer:—

"55, Stony Walk, Union Street, Borough,
"September 29, 186—, 4.30 p.m.

"HOND. SIR,

"Since I wrote yesterday morning, something has occurred which, it may be, and I think it will, will help to bring this melancholy affair to a satisfactory termination and conclusion. I had better explain, Mr. Trewilyan, how I have been at work from the beginning about watching the Colonel. I couldn't do nothing with the porter at the Albany, which he is always mostly muzzled with beer, and he wouldn't have taken my money, not on the square. So, when it was tellegrammed to me as the Colonel was on the move in the North, I put on two boys as knows the Colonel, at eighteenpence a day, at each end, one Piccadilly end, and the other Saville Row end, and yesterday morning, as quick as ever could be, after the Limited Express Edinburgh Male Up was in, there comes the Saville Row End Boy here to say as the Colonel was lodged safe in his downey. Then I was off immediate myself to St. Diddulph's, because I knows

what it is to trust to Inferiors when matters gets delicate. Now, there hadn't been no letters from the Colonel, nor none to him as I could make out, though that mightn't be so sure. She might have had 'em addressed to A. Z., or the like of that, at any of the Post-offices as was distant, as nobody could give the notice to 'em all. Barring the money, which I know ain't an object when the end is so desirable, it don't do to be too ubiketous, because things will go astray. But I've kept my eye uncommon open, and I don't think there have been no letters since that last which was sent, Mr. Trewilyan, let any of 'em, parsons or what not, say what they will. And I don't see as parsons are better than other folk when they has to do with a lady as likes her fancy-man."

Trevelyan, when he had read as far as this, threw down the letter and tore his hair in despair. "My wife," he exclaimed, "Oh, my wife!" But it was essential that he should read Bozzle's letter, and he persevered.

"Well; I took to the ground myself as soon as ever I heard that the Colonel was among us, and I hung out at the Full Moon. They had been quite on the square with me at the Full Moon, which I mention, because, of course, it has to be remembered, and it do come up as a hitem. And I'm proud, Mr. Trewilyan, as I did take to the ground myself; for what should happen but I see the Colonel as large as life ringing at the parson's bell at 1.47 p. m. He was let in at 1.49, and he was let out at 2.17. He went away in a cab which it was kept, and I followed him till he was put down at the Arcade, and I left him having

his 'ed washed and greased at Trufitt's rooms, halfway up. It was a wonder to me when I see this, Mr. Trewilyan, as he didn't have his 'ed done first, as they most of 'em does when they're going to see their ladies; but I couldn't make nothing of that, though I did try to put too and too together, as I always does.

"What he did at the parson's, Mr. Trewilyan, I won't say I saw, and I won't say I know. It's my opinion the young woman there isn't on the square, though she's been remembered too, and is a hitem of course. And, Mr. Trewilyan, it do go against the grain with me when they're remembered and ain't on the square. I doesn't expect too much of Human Nature, which is poor, as the saying goes; but when they're remembered and ain't on the square after that, it's too bad for Human Nature. It's more than poor. It's what I calls beggarly.

"He ain't been there since, Mr. Trewilyan, and he goes out of town to-morrow by the 1.15 p.m. express to Bridport. So he lets on; but of course I shall see to that. That he's been at St. Diddulph's, in the house from 1.47 to 2.17, you may take as a fact. There won't be no shaking of that, because I have it in my mem. book, and no Counsel can get the better of it. Of course he went there to see her, and it's my belief he did. The young woman as was remembered says he didn't, but she isn't on the square. They never is when a lady wants to see her gentleman, though they comes round afterwards, and tells up everything when it comes before his ordinary lordship.

"If you ask me, Mr. Trewilyan, I don't think it's ripe yet for the court, but we'll have it ripe before

long. I'll keep a look-out, because it's just possible she may leave town. If she do, I'll be down upon them together, and no mistake.

"Yours most respectful,

"S. Bozzle."

Every word in the letter had been a dagger to Trevelyan, and yet he felt himself to be under an obligation to the man who had written it. No one else would or could make facts known to him. If she were innocent, let him know that she were innocent, and he would proclaim her innocence, and believe in her innocence,—and sacrifice himself to her innocence, if such sacrifice were necessary. But if she were guilty, let him also know that. He knew how bad it was, all that bribing of postmen and maidservants, who took his money, and her money also, very likely. It was dirt, all of it. But who had put him into the dirt? His wife had, at least, deceived him,—had deceived him and disobeyed him, and it was necessary that he should know the facts. Life without a Bozzle would now have been to him a perfect blank.

The Colonel had been to the parsonage at St. Didulph's, and had been admitted! As to that he had no doubt. Nor did he really doubt that his wife had seen the visitor. He had sent his wife first into a remote village on Dartmoor, and there she had been visited by her—lover! How was he to use any other word? Iago;—oh, Iago! The pity of it, Iago! Then, when she had learned that this was discovered, she had left the retreat in which he had placed her,—without permission from him,—and had taken herself to the house of a relative of hers. Here she was

visited again by her—lover! Oh, Iago; the pity of it, Iago! And then there had been between them an almost constant correspondence. So much he had ascertained as fact; but he did not for a moment believe that Bozzle had learned all the facts. There might be correspondence, or even visits, of which Bozzle could learn nothing. How could Bozzle know where Mrs. Trevelyan was during all those hours which Colonel Osborne passed in London? That which he knew, he knew absolutely, and on that he could act; but there was, of course, much of which he knew nothing. Gradually the truth would unveil itself, and then he would act. He would tear that Colonel into fragments, and throw his wife from him with all the ignominy which the law made possible to him.

But in the meantime he wrote a letter to Mr. Outhouse. Colonel Osborne, after all that had been said, had been admitted at the parsonage, and Trevelyan was determined to let the clergyman know what he thought about it. The oftener he turned the matter in his mind, as he walked slowly up and down the piazza of St. Mark, the more absurd it appeared to him to doubt that his wife had seen the man. Of course she had seen him. He walked there nearly the whole night, thinking of it, and as he dragged himself off at last to his inn, had almost come to have but one desire,—namely, that he should find her out, that the evidence should be conclusive, that it should be proved, and so brought to an end. Then he would destroy her, and destroy that man,—and afterwards destroy himself, so bitter to him would be his ignominy. He almost revelled in the idea of the tragedy he would

make. It was three o'clock before he was in his bedroom, and then he wrote his letter to Mr. Outhouse before he took himself to his bed. It was as follows:—

Venice, Oct. 4, 186—.

"Sir,

"Information of a certain kind, on which I can place a firm reliance, has reached me, to the effect that Colonel Osborne has been allowed to visit at your house during the sojourn of my wife under your roof. I will thank you to inform me whether this be true; as, although I am confident of my facts, it is necessary, in reference to my ulterior conduct, that I should have from you either an admission or a denial of my assertion. It is of course open to you to leave my letter unanswered. Should you think proper to do so, I shall know also how to deal with that fact.

"As to your conduct in admitting Colonel Osborne into your house while my wife is there,—after all that has passed, and all that you know that has passed,—I am quite unable to speak with anything like moderation of feeling. Had the man succeeded in forcing himself into your residence, you should have been the first to give me notice of it. As it is, I have been driven to ascertain the fact from other sources. I think that you have betrayed the trust that a husband has placed in you, and that you will find from the public voice that you will be regarded as having disgraced yourself as a clergyman.

"In reference to my wife herself, I would wish her to know, that after what has now taken place, I shall not feel myself justified in leaving our child longer in her hands, even tender as are his years. I shall take

steps for having him removed. What further I shall do to vindicate myself, and extricate myself as far as may be possible from the slough of despond in which I have been submerged, she and you will learn in due time.

"Your obedient servant,

"L. TREVELYAN.

"A letter addressed 'poste restante, Venice,' will reach me here."

If Trevelyan was mad when he wrote this letter, Mr. Outhouse was very nearly as mad when he read it. He had most strongly desired to have nothing to do with his wife's niece when she was separated from her husband. He was a man honest, charitable, and sufficiently affectionate; but he was timid, and disposed to think ill of those whose modes of life were strange to him. Actuated by these feelings, he would have declined to offer the hospitality of his roof to Mrs. Trevelyan, had any choice been left to him. But there had been no choice. She had come thither unasked, with her boy and baggage, and he could not send her away. His wife had told him that it was his duty to protect these women till their father came, and he recognised the truth of what his wife said. There they were, and there they must remain throughout the winter. It was hard upon him,—especially as the difficulties and embarrassments as to money were so disagreeable to him;—but there was no help for it. His duty must be done though it were ever so painful. Then that horrid Colonel had come. And now had come this letter, in which he was not only accused of

being an accomplice between his married niece and her lover, but was also assured that he should be held up to public ignominy and disgrace. Though he had often declared that Trevelyan was mad, he would not remember that now. Such a letter as he had received should have been treated by him as the production of a madman. But he was not sane enough himself to see the matter in that light. He gnashed his teeth, and clenched his fist, and was almost beside himself as he read the letter a second time.

There had been a method in Trevelyan's madness; for, though he had declared to himself that without doubt Bozzle had been right in saying that as the Colonel had been at the parsonage, therefore, as a certainty, Mrs. Trevelyan had met the Colonel there, yet he had not so stated in his letter. He had merely asserted that Colonel Osborne had been at the house, and had founded his accusation upon that alleged fact. The alleged fact had been in truth a fact. So far Bozzle had been right. The Colonel had been at the parsonage; and the reader knows how far Mr. Outhouse had been to blame for his share in the matter! He rushed off to his wife with the letter, declaring at first that Mrs. Trevelyan, Nora, and the child, and the servant, should be sent out of the house at once. But at last Mrs. Outhouse succeeded in showing him that he would not be justified in ill-using them because Trevelyan had ill-used him. "But I will write to him," said Mr. Outhouse. "He shall know what I think about it." And he did write his letter that day, in spite of his wife's entreaties that he would allow the sun to set upon his wrath. And his letter was as follows:—

"St. Diddulph's, October 8, 186—.

"SIR,

"I have received your letter of the 4th, which is more iniquitous, unjust, and ungrateful, than anything I ever before saw written. I have been surprised from the first at your gross cruelty to your unoffending wife; but even that seems to me more intelligible than your conduct in writing such words as those which you have dared to send to me.

"For your wife's sake, knowing that she is in a great degree still in your power, I will condescend to tell you what has happened. When Mrs. Trevelyan found herself constrained to leave Nuncombe Putney by your aspersions on her character, she came here, to the protection of her nearest relatives within reach, till her father and mother should be in England. Sorely against my will I received them into my home, because they had been deprived of other shelter by the cruelty or madness of him who should have been their guardian. Here they are, and here they shall remain till Sir Marmaduke Rowley arrives. The other day, on the 29th of September, Colonel Osborne, who is their father's old friend, called, not on them, but on me. I may truly say that I did not wish to see Colonel Osborne. They did not see him, nor did he ask to see them. If his coming was a fault,—and I think it was a fault,—they were not implicated in it. He came, remained a few minutes, and went without seeing any one but myself. That is the history of Colonel Osborne's visit to my house.

"I have not thought fit to show your letter to your wife, or to make her acquainted with this further proof of your want of reason. As to the threats which you

hold out of removing her child from her, you can of course do nothing except by law. I do not think that even you will be sufficiently audacious to take any steps of that description. Whatever protection the law may give her and her child from your tyranny and misconduct cannot be obtained till her father shall be here.

"I have only further to request that you will not address any further communication to me. Should you do so, it will be refused.

"Yours, in deep indignation,

"OLIPHANT OUTHOUSE."

Trevelyan had also written two other letters to England, one to Mr. Bideawhile, and the other to Bozzle. In the former he acquainted the lawyer that he had discovered that his wife still maintained her intercourse with Colonel Osborne, and that he must therefore remove his child from her custody. He then inquired what steps would be necessary to enable him to obtain possession of his little boy. In the letter to Bozzle he sent a cheque, and his thanks for the ex-policeman's watchful care. He desired Bozzle to continue his precautions, and explained his intentions about his son. Being somewhat afraid that Mr. Bideawhile might not be zealous on his behalf, and not himself understanding accurately the extent of his power with regard to his own child, or the means whereby he might exercise it, he was anxious to obtain assistance from Bozzle also on this point. He had no doubt that Bozzle knew all about it. He had great confidence in Bozzle. But still he did not like to consult the ex-policeman. He knew that it became him to have some

regard for his own dignity. He therefore put the matter very astutely to Bozzle,—asking no questions, but alluding to his difficulty in a way that would enable Bozzle to offer advice.

And where was he to get a woman to take charge of his child? If Lady Milborough would do it, how great would be the comfort! But he was almost sure that Lady Milborough would not do it. All his friends had turned against him, and Lady Milborough among the number. There was nobody left to him, but Bozzle. Could he entrust Bozzle to find some woman for him who would take adequate charge of the little fellow, till he himself could see to the child's education? He did not put this question to Bozzle in plain terms; but he was very astute, and wrote in such a fashion that Bozzle could make a proposal, if any proposal were within his power.

The answer from Mr. Outhouse came first. To this Mr. Trevelyan paid very little attention. It was just what he expected. Of course, Mr. Outhouse's assurance about Colonel Osborne went for nothing. A man who would permit intercourse in his house between a married lady and her lover, would not scruple to deny that he had permitted it. Then came Mr. Bideawhile's answer, which was very short. Mr. Bideawhile said that nothing could be done about the child till Mr. Trevelyan should return to England;—and that he could give no opinion as to what should be done then till he knew more of the circumstances. It was quite clear to Trevelyan that he must employ some other lawyer. Mr. Bideawhile had probably been corrupted by Colonel Osborne. Could Bozzle recommend a lawyer?

From Bozzle himself there came no other immediate reply than, "his duty, and that he would make further inquiries."

CHAPTER XIV.

The American Minister.

In the second week in October, Mr. Glascock returned to Florence, intending to remain there till the weather should have become bearable at Naples. His father was said to be better, but was in such a condition as hardly to receive much comfort from his son's presence. His mind was gone, and he knew no one but his nurse; and, though Mr. Glascock was unwilling to put himself altogether out of the reach of returning at a day's notice, he did not find himself obliged to remain in Naples during the heat of the autumn. So Mr. Glascock returned to the hotel at Florence, accompanied by the tall man who wore the buttons. The hotel-keeper did not allow such a light to remain long hidden under a bushel, and it was soon spread far and wide that the Honourable Charles Glascock and his suite were again in the beautiful city.

And the fact was soon known to the American Minister and his family. Mr. Spalding was a man who at home had been very hostile to English interests. Many American gentlemen are known for such hostility. They make anti-English speeches about the country, as though they thought that war with England would produce certain triumph to the States, certain increase to American trade, and certain downfall to a tyranny which no Anglo-Saxon nation ought to endure. But such is hardly their real opinion. There,

in the States, as also here in England, you shall from day to day hear men propounding, in very loud language, advanced theories of political action, the assertion of which is supposed to be necessary to the end which they have in view. Men whom we know to have been as mild as sucking doves in the political aspiration of their whole lives, suddenly jump up, and with infuriated gestures declare themselves the enemies of everything existing. When they have obtained their little purpose,—or have failed to do so,—they revert naturally into their sucking-dove elements. It is so with Americans as frequently as with ourselves,—and there is no political subject on which it is considered more expedient to express pseudo-enthusiasm than on that of the sins of England. It is understood that we do not resent it. It is presumed that we regard it as the Irishman regarded his wife's cuffs. In the States a large party, which consists chiefly of those who have lately left English rule, and who are keen to prove to themselves how wise they have been in doing so, is pleased by this strong language against England; and, therefore, the strong language is spoken. But the speakers, who are, probably, men knowing something of the world, mean it not at all; they have no more idea of war with England than they have of war with all Europe; and their respect for England and for English opinion is unbounded. In their political tones of speech and modes of action they strive to be as English as possible. Mr. Spalding's aspirations were of this nature. He had uttered speeches against England which would make the hair stand on end on the head of an uninitiated English reader. He had told his countrymen that Englishmen hugged their chains,

and would do so until American hammers had knocked those chains from off their wounded wrists and bleeding ankles. He had declared that, if certain American claims were not satisfied, there was nothing left for Americans to do but to cross the ferry with such a sheriff's officer as would be able to make distraint on the great English household. He had declared that the sheriff's officer would have very little trouble. He had spoken of Canada as an outlying American territory, not yet quite sufficiently redeemed from savage life to be received into the Union as a State. There is a multiplicity of subjects of this kind ready to the hand of the American orator. Mr. Spalding had been quite successful, and was now Minister at Florence; but, perhaps, one of the greatest pleasures coming to him from his prosperity was the enjoyment of the society of well-bred Englishmen, in the capital to which he had been sent. When, therefore, his wife and nieces pointed out to him the fact that it was manifestly his duty to call upon Mr. Glascock after what had passed between them on that night under the Campanile, he did not rebel for an instant against the order given to him. His mind never reverted for a moment to that opinion which had gained for him such a round of applause, when expressed on the platform of the Temperance Hall at Nubbly Creek, State of Illinois, to the effect that the English aristocrat, thorough-born and thorough-bred, who inherited acres and title from his father, could never be fitting company for a thoughtful Christian American citizen. He at once had his hat brushed, and took up his best gloves and umbrella, and went off to Mr. Glascock's hotel. He was strictly enjoined by the ladies to fix a

day on which Mr. Glascock would come and dine at the American embassy.

"'C. G.' has come back to see you," said Olivia to her elder sister. They had always called him "C. G." since the initials had been seen on the travelling bag.

"Probably," said Carry. "There is so very little else to bring people to Florence, that there can hardly be any other reason for his coming. They do say it's terribly hot at Naples just now; but that can have had nothing to do with it."

"We shall see," said Livy. "I'm sure he's in love with you. He looked to me just like a proper sort of lover for you, when I saw his long legs creeping up over our heads into the banquette."

"You ought to have been very much obliged to his long legs;—so sick as you were at the time."

"I like him amazingly," said Livy, "legs and all. I only hope Uncle Jonas won't bore him, so as to prevent his coming."

"His father is very ill," said Carry, "and I don't suppose we shall see him at all."

But the American Minister was successful. He found Mr. Glascock sitting in his dressing-gown, smoking a cigar, and reading a newspaper. The English aristocrat seemed very glad to see his visitor, and assumed no airs at all. The American altogether forgot his speech at Nubbly Creek, and found the aristocrat's society to be very pleasant. He lit a cigar, and they talked about Naples, Rome, and Florence. Mr. Spalding, when the marbles of old Rome were mentioned, was a little too keen in insisting on the merits of Story, Miss Hosmer, and Hiram Powers, and hardly

carried his listener with him in the parallel which he drew between Greenough and Phidias; and he was somewhat repressed by the apathetic curtness of Mr. Glascock's reply, when he suggested that the victory gained by the gunboats at Vicksburg, on the Mississippi, was vividly brought to his mind by an account which he had just been reading of the battle of Actium; but he succeeded in inducing Mr. Glascock to accept an invitation to dinner for the next day but one, and the two gentlemen parted on the most amicable terms.

Everybody meets everybody in Florence every day. Carry and Livy Spalding had met Mr. Glascock twice before the dinner at their uncle's house, so that they met at dinner quite as intimate friends. Mrs. Spalding had very large rooms, up three flights of stairs, on the Lungarno. The height of her abode was attributed by Mrs. Spalding to her dread of mosquitoes. She had not yet learned that people in Florence require no excuse for being asked to walk up three flights of stairs. The rooms, when they were reached, were very lofty, floored with what seemed to be marble, and were of a nature almost to warrant Mrs. Spalding in feeling that nature had made her more akin to an Italian countess than to a matron of Nubbly Creek, State of Illinois, where Mr. Spalding had found her and made her his own. There was one other Englishman present, Mr. Harris Hyde Granville Gore, from the Foreign Office, now serving temporarily at the English Legation in Florence; and an American, Mr. Jackson Unthank, a man of wealth and taste, who was resolved on having such a collection of pictures at his house in Baltimore that no English private collection should in any way

come near to it; and a Tuscan, from the Italian Foreign Office, to whom nobody could speak except Mr. Harris Hyde Granville Gore,—who did not indeed seem to enjoy the efforts of conversation which were expected of him. The Italian, who had a handle to his name,—he was a Count Buonarosci,—took Mrs. Spalding into dinner. Mrs. Spalding had been at great trouble to ascertain whether this was proper, or whether she should not entrust herself to Mr. Glascock. There were different points to be considered in the matter. She did not quite know whether she was in Italy or in America. She had glimmerings on the subject of her privilege to carry her own nationality into her own drawing-room. And then she was called upon to deal between an Italian Count with an elder brother, and an English Honourable, who had no such encumbrance. Which of the two was possessed of the higher rank? "I've found it all out, Aunt Mary," said Livy. "You must take the Count." For Livy wanted to give her sister every chance. "How have you found it out?" said the aunt. "You may be surè it is so," said Livy. And the lady in her doubt yielded the point. Mrs. Spalding, as she walked along the passage on the Count's arm, determined that she would learn Italian. She would have given all Nubbly Creek to have been able to speak a word to Count Buonarosci. To do her justice, it must be admitted that she had studied a few words. But her courage failed her, and she could not speak them. She was very careful, however, that Mr. H. H. G. Gore was placed in the chair next to the Count.

"We are very glad to see you here," said Mr. Spalding, addressing himself especially to Mr. Glascock,

as he stood up at his own seat at the round table. "In leaving my own country, sir, there is nothing that I value more than the privilege of becoming acquainted with those whose historic names and existing positions are of such inestimable value to the world at large." In saying this, Mr. Spalding was not in the least insincere, nor did his conscience at all prick him in reference to that speech at Nubbly Creek. On both occasions he half thought as he spoke,—or thought that he thought so. Unless it be on subjects especially endeared to us the thoughts of but few of us go much beyond this.

Mr. Glascock, who sat between Mrs. Spalding and her niece, was soon asked by the elder lady whether he had been in the States. No; he had not been in the States. "Then, you must come, Mr. Glascock," said Mrs. Spalding, "though I will not say, dwelling as we now are in the metropolis of the world of art, that we in our own homes have as much of the outer beauty of form to charm the stranger as is to be found in other lands. Yet I think that the busy lives of men, and the varied institutions of a free country, must always have an interest peculiarly their own." Mr. Glascock declared that he quite agreed with her, and expressed a hope that he might some day find himself in New York.

"You wouldn't like it at all," said Carry; "because you are an aristocrat. I don't mean that it would be your fault."

"Why should that prevent my liking it,—even if I were an aristocrat?"

"One half of the people would run after you, and the other half would run away from you," said Carry.

"Then I'd take to the people who ran after me, and would not regard the others."

"That's all very well,—but you wouldn't like it. And then you would become unfair to what you saw. When some of our speechifying people talked to you about our institutions through their noses, you would think that the institutions themselves must be bad. And we have nothing to show except our institutions."

"What are American institutions?" asked Mr. Glascock.

"Everything is an institution. Having iced water to drink in every room of the house is an institution. Having hospitals in every town is an institution. Travelling altogether in one class of railway cars is an institution. Saying sir, is an institution. Teaching all the children mathematics is an institution. Plenty of food is an institution. Getting drunk is an institution in a great many towns. Lecturing is an institution. There are plenty of them, and some are very good;—but you wouldn't like it."

"At any rate, I'll go and see," said Mr. Glascock.

"If you do, I hope we may be at home," said Miss Spalding.

Mr. Spalding, in the mean time, with the assistance of his countryman, the man of taste, was endeavouring to explain a certain point in American politics to the count. As, in doing this, they called upon Mr. Gore to translate every speech they made into Italian, and as Mr. Gore had never offered his services as an interpreter, and as the Italian did not quite catch the subtle meanings of the Americans in Mr. Gore's Tuscan version, and did not in the least wish to understand the things that were explained to him, Mr. Gore and the Italian

began to think that the two Americans were bores. "The truth is, Mr. Spalding," said Mr. Gore, "I've got such a cold in my head, that I don't think I can explain it any more." Then Livy Spalding laughed aloud, and the two American gentlemen began to eat their dinner. "It sounds ridiculous, don't it?" said Mr. Gore, in a whisper.

"I ought not to have laughed, I know," said Livy.

"The very best thing you could have done. I shan't be troubled any more now. The fact is, I know just nine words of Italian. Now there is a difficulty in having to explain the whole theory of American politics to an Italian, who doesn't want to know anything about it, with so very small a repertory of words at one's command."

"How well you did it!"

"Too well. I felt that. So well that, unless I had stopped it, I shouldn't have been able to say a word to you all through dinner. Your laughter clenched it, and Buonarosci and I will be grateful to you for ever."

After the ladies went there was rather a bad half hour for Mr. Glascock. He was button-holed by the minister, and found it oppressive before he was enabled to escape into the drawing-room. "Mr. Glascock," said the minister, "an English gentleman, sir, like you, who has the privilege of an hereditary seat in your parliament,"—Mr. Glascock was not quite sure whether he were being accused of having an hereditary seat in the House of Commons, but he would not stop to correct any possible error on that point,—"and who has been born to all the gifts of fortune, rank, and social eminence, should never think that his education is

complete till he has visited our great cities in the west." Mr. Glascock hinted that he by no means conceived his education to be complete; but the minister went on without attending to this. "Till you have seen, sir, what men can do who are placed upon the earth with all God's gifts of free intelligence, free air, and a free soil, but without any of those other good things which we are accustomed to call the gifts of fortune, you can never become aware of the infinite ingenuity of man." There had been much said before, but just at this moment Mr. Gore and the American left the room, and the Italian followed them briskly. Mr. Glascock at once made a decided attempt to bolt; but the minister was on the alert, and was too quick for him. And he was by no means ashamed of what he was doing. He had got his guest by the coat, and openly declared his intention of holding him. "Let me keep you for a few minutes, sir," said he, "while I dilate on this point in one direction. In the drawing-room female spells are too potent for us male orators. In going among us, Mr. Glascock, you must not look for luxury or refinement, for you will find them not. Nor must you hope to encounter the highest order of erudition. The lofty summits of acquired knowledge tower in your country with an altitude we have not reached yet."

"It's very good of you to say so," said Mr. Glascock.

"No, sir. In our new country and in our new cities we still lack the luxurious perfection of fastidious civilisation. But, sir, regard our level. That is what I say to every unprejudiced Britisher that comes among us;—look at our level. And when you have looked

at our level, I think that you will confess that we live on the highest table-land that the world has yet afforded to mankind. You follow my meaning, Mr. Glascock?" Mr. Glascock was not sure that he did, but the minister went on to make that meaning clear. "It is the multitude that with us is educated. Go into their houses, sir, and see how they thumb their books. Look at the domestic correspondence of our helps and servants, and see how they write and spell. We haven't got the mountains, sir, but our table-lands are the highest on which the bright sun of our Almighty God has as yet shone with its illuminating splendour in this improving world of ours! It is because we are a young people, sir,—with nothing as yet near to us of the decrepitude of age. The weakness of age, sir, is the penalty paid by the folly of youth. We are not so wise, sir, but what we too shall suffer from its effects as years roll over our heads." There was a great deal more, but at last Mr. Glascock did escape into the drawing-room.

"My uncle has been saying a few words to you perhaps," said Carry Spalding.

"Yes; he has," said Mr. Glascock.

"He usually does," said Carry Spalding.

CHAPTER XV.

About Fishing, and Navigation, and Head-Dresses.

THE feud between Miss Stanbury and Mr. Gibson raged violently in Exeter, and produced many complications which were very difficult indeed of management. Each belligerent party felt that a special injury had been inflicted upon it. Mr. Gibson was quite sure that he had been grossly misused by Miss Stanbury the

elder, and strongly suspected that Miss Stanbury the younger had had a hand in this misconduct. It had been positively asserted to him,—at least so he thought, but in this was probably in error,—that the lady would accept him if he proposed to her. All Exeter had been made aware of the intended compact. He, indeed, had denied its existence to Miss French, comforting himself, as best he might, with the reflection that all is fair in love and war; but when he counted over his injuries he did not think of this denial. All Exeter, so to say, had known of it. And yet, when he had come with his proposal, he had been refused without a moment's consideration, first by the aunt, and then by the niece;—and, after that, had been violently abused, and at last turned out of the house! Surely, no gentleman had ever before been subjected to ill-usage so violent! But Miss Stanbury the elder was quite as assured that the injury had been done to her. As to the matter of the compact itself, she knew very well that she had been as true as steel. She had done everything in her power to bring about the marriage. She had been generous in her offers of money. She had used all her powers of persuasion on Dorothy, and she had given every opportunity to Mr. Gibson. It was not her fault if he had not been able to avail himself of the good things which she had put in his way. He had first been, as she thought, ignorant and arrogant, fancying that the good things ought to be made his own without any trouble on his part;—and then awkward, not knowing how to take the trouble when trouble was necessary. And as to that matter of abusive language and turning out of the house, Miss Stanbury was quite convinced that she was sinned against, and

not herself the sinner. She declared to Martha, more than once, that Mr. Gibson had used such language to her that, coming out of a clergyman's mouth, it had quite dismayed her. Martha, who knew her mistress, probably felt that Mr. Gibson had at least received as good as he gave; but she had made no attempt to set her mistress right on that point.

But the cause of Miss Stanbury's sharpest anger was not to be found in Mr. Gibson's conduct either before Dorothy's refusal of his offer, or on the occasion of his being turned out of the house. A base rumour was spread about the city that Dorothy Stanbury had been offered to Mr. Gibson, that Mr. Gibson had civilly declined the offer,—and that hence had arisen the wrath of the Juno of the Close. Now this was not to be endured by Miss Stanbury. She had felt even in the moment of her original anger against Mr. Gibson that she was bound in honour not to tell the story against him. She had brought him into the little difficulty, and she at least would hold her tongue. She was quite sure that Dorothy would never boast of her triumph. And Martha had been strictly cautioned,—as indeed, also, had Brooke Burgess. The man had behaved like an idiot, Miss Stanbury said; but he had been brought into a little dilemma, and nothing should be said about it from the house in the Close. But when the other rumour reached Miss Stanbury's ears, when Mrs. Crumbie condoled with her on her niece's misfortune, when Mrs. MacHugh asked whether Mr. Gibson had not behaved rather badly to the young lady, then our Juno's celestial mind was filled with a divine anger. But even then she did not declare the truth. She asked a question of Mrs. Crumbie, and was

enabled, as she thought, to trace the falsehood to the Frenches. She did not think that Mr. Gibson could on a sudden have become so base a liar. "Mr. Gibson fast and loose with my niece!" she said to Mrs. MacHugh. "You have not got the story quite right, my dear friend. Pray, believe me;—there has been nothing of that sort." "I dare say not," said Mrs. MacHugh, "and I'm sure I don't care. Mr. Gibson has been going to marry one of the French girls for the last ten years, and I think he ought to make up his mind and do it at last."

"I can assure you he is quite welcome as far as Dorothy is concerned," said Miss Stanbury.

Without a doubt the opinion did prevail throughout Exeter that Mr. Gibson, who had been regarded time out of mind as the property of the Miss Frenches, had been angled for by the ladies in the Close, that he had nearly been caught, but that he had slipped the hook out of his mouth, and was now about to subside quietly into the net which had been originally prepared for him. Arabella French had not spoken loudly on the subject, but Camilla had declared in more than one house that she had most direct authority for stating that the gentleman had never dreamed of offering to the young lady. "Why he should not do so if he pleases, I don't know," said Camilla. "Only the fact is that he has not pleased. The rumour of course has reached him, and, as we happen to be very old friends, we have authority for denying it altogether." All this came round to Miss Stanbury, and she was divine in her wrath.

"If they drive me to it," she said to Dorothy, "I'll

have the whole truth told by the bellman through the city, or I'll publish it in the County Gazette."

"Pray don't say a word about it, Aunt Stanbury."

"It is those odious girls. He's there now every day."

"Why shouldn't he go there, Aunt Stanbury?"

"If he's fool enough, let him go. I don't care where he goes. But I do care about these lies. They wouldn't dare to say it only they think my mouth is closed. They've no honour themselves, but they screen themselves behind mine."

"I'm sure they won't find themselves mistaken in what they trust to," said Dorothy, with a spirit that her aunt had not expected from her. Miss Stanbury at this time had told nobody that the offer to her niece had been made and repeated and finally rejected;—but she found it very difficult to hold her tongue.

In the meantime Mr. Gibson spent a good deal of his time at Heavitree. It should not perhaps be asserted broadly that he had made up his mind that marriage would be good for him; but he had made up his mind, at least, to this, that it was no longer to be postponed without a balance of disadvantage. The Charybdis in the Close drove him helpless into the whirlpool of the Heavitree Scylla. He had no longer an escape from the perils of the latter shore. He had been so mauled by the opposite waves, that he had neither spirit nor skill left to him to keep in the middle track. He was almost daily at Heavitree, and did not attempt to conceal from himself the approach of his doom.

But still there were two of them. He knew that he must become a prey, but was there any choice left to

him as to which siren should have him? He had been quite aware in his more gallant days, before he had been knocked about on that Charybdis rock, that he might sip, and taste, and choose between the sweets. He had come to think lately that the younger young lady was the sweeter. Eight years ago indeed the passages between him and the elder had been tender; but Camilla had then been simply a romping girl, hardly more than a year or two beyond her teens. Now, with her matured charms, Camilla was certainly the more engaging, as far as outward form went. Arabella's cheeks were thin and long, and her front teeth had come to show themselves. Her eyes were no doubt still bright, and what she had of hair was soft and dark. But it was very thin in front, and what there was of supplemental mass behind,—the bandbox by which Miss Stanbury was so much aggrieved,—was worn with an indifference to the lines of beauty, which Mr. Gibson himself found to be very depressing. A man with a fair burden on his back is not a grievous sight; but when we see a small human being attached to a bale of goods which he can hardly manage to move, we feel that the poor fellow has been cruelly overweighted. Mr. Gibson certainly had that sensation about Arabella's chignon. And as he regarded it in a nearer and a dearer light,—as a chignon that might possibly become his own, as a burden which in one sense he might himself be called upon to bear, as a domestic utensil of which he himself might be called upon to inspect, and, perhaps, to aid the shifting on and the shifting off, he did begin to think that that side of the Scylla gulf ought to be avoided if possible. And probably this propensity on his part, this feeling

that he would like to reconsider the matter dispassionately before he gave himself up for good to his old love, may have been increased by Camilla's apparent withdrawal of her claims. He felt mildly grateful to the Heavitree household in general for accepting him in this time of his affliction, but he could not admit to himself that they had a right to decide upon him in private conclave, and allot him either to the one or to the other nuptials without consultation with himself. To be swallowed up by Scylla he now recognised as his doom; but he thought he ought to be asked on which side of the gulf he would prefer to go down. The way in which Camilla spoke of him as a thing that wasn't hers, but another's; and the way in which Arabella looked at him, as though he were hers and could never be another's, wounded his manly pride. He had always understood that he might have his choice, and he could not understand that the little mishap which had befallen him in the Close was to rob him of that privilege.

He used to drink tea at Heavitree in those days. On one evening on going in he found himself alone with Arabella. "Oh, Mr. Gibson," she said, "we weren't sure whether you'd come. And mamma and Camilla have gone out to Mrs. Camadge's." Mr. Gibson muttered some word to the effect that he hoped he had kept nobody at home; and, as he did so, he remembered that he had distinctly said that he would come on this evening. "I don't know that I should have gone," said Arabella, "because I am not quite,—not quite myself at present. No, not ill; not at all. Don't you know what it is, Mr. Gibson, to be,—to be,—to be,—not quite yourself?" Mr. Gibson said that he had very often felt like that. "And one can't get over it;

—can one?" continued Arabella. "There comes a presentiment that something is going to happen, and a kind of belief that something has happened, though you don't know what; and the heart refuses to be light, and the spirit becomes abashed, and the mind, though it creates new thoughts, will not settle itself to its accustomed work. I suppose it's what the novels have called Melancholy."

"I suppse it is," said Mr Gibson. "But there's generally some cause for it. Debt for instance——"

"It's nothing of that kind with me. It's no debt, at least, that can be written down in the figures of ordinary arithmetic. Sit down, Mr. Gibson, and we will have some tea." Then, as she stretched forward to ring the bell, he thought that he never in his life had seen anything so unshapely as that huge wen at the back of her head. "Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens!" He could not help quoting the words to himself. She was dressed with some attempt at being smart, but her ribbons were soiled, and her lace was tawdry, and the fabric of her dress was old and dowdy. He was quite sure that he would feel no pride in calling her Mrs. Gibson, no pleasure in having her all to himself at his own hearth. "I hope we shall escape the bitterness of Miss Stanbury's tongue if we drink tea tête-à-tête," she said, with her sweetest smile.

"I don't suppose she'll know anything about it."

"She knows about everything, Mr. Gibson. It's astonishing what she knows. She has eyes and ears everywhere. I shouldn't care, if she didn't see and hear so very incorrectly. I'm told now that she declares——; but it doesn't signify."

"Declares what?" asked Mr. Gibson.

"Never mind. But wasn't it odd how all Exeter believed that you were going to be married in that house, and to live there all the rest of your life, and be one of Miss Stanbury's slaves. I never believed it, Mr. Gibson." This she said with a sad smile, that ought to have brought him on his knees, in spite of the chignon.

"One can't help these things," said Mr. Gibson.

"I never could have believed it;—not even if you had not given me an assurance so solemn, and so sweet, that there was nothing in it." The poor man had given the assurance, and could not deny the solemnity and the sweetness. "That was a happy moment for us, Mr. Gibson; because, though we never believed it, when it was dinned into our ears so frequently, when it was made such a triumph in the Close, it was impossible not to fear that there might be something in it." He felt that he ought to make some reply, but he did not know what to say. He was thoroughly ashamed of the lie he had told, but he could not untell it. "Camilla reproached me afterwards for asking you," whispered Arabella, in her softest, tenderest voice. "She said that it was unmaidenly. I hope you did not think it unmaidenly, Mr. Gibson?"

"Oh dear no;—not at all," said he.

Arabella French was painfully alive to the fact that she must do something. She had her fish on the hook; but of what use is a fish on your hook, if you cannot land him? When could she have a better opportunity than this of landing the scaly darling out of the fresh and free waters of his bachelor stream, and sousing him into the pool of domestic life, to be ready there for her own household purposes? "I had known you

so long, Mr. Gibson," she said, "and had valued your friendship so—so deeply." As he looked at her, he could see nothing but the shapeless excrescence to which his eyes had been so painfully called by Miss Stanbury's satire. It is true that he had formerly been very tender with her, but she had not then carried about with her that distorted monster. He did not believe himself to be at all bound by anything which had passed between them in circumstances so very different. But yet he ought to say something. He ought to have said something; but he said nothing. She was patient, however, very patient; and she went on playing him with her hook. "I am so glad that I did not go out to-night with mamma. It has been such a pleasure to me to have this conversation with you. Camilla, perhaps, would say that I am—unmaidenly."

"I don't think so."

"That is all that I care for, Mr. Gibson. If you acquit me, I do not mind who accuses. I should not like to suppose that you thought me unmaidenly. Anything would be better than that; but I can throw all such considerations to the wind when true—true—friendship is concerned. Don't you think that one ought, Mr. Gibson?"

If it had not been for the thing at the back of her head, he would have done it now. Nothing but that gave him courage to abstain. It grew bigger and bigger, more shapeless, monstrous, absurd, and abominable, as he looked at it. Nothing should force upon him the necessity of assisting to carry such an abortion through the world. "One ought to sacrifice everything to friendship," said Mr. Gibson, "except self-respect."

He meant nothing personal. Something special, in

the way of an opinion, was expected of him; and, therefore, he had striven to say something special. But she was in tears in a moment. "Oh, Mr. Gibson," she exclaimed; "oh, Mr. Gibson!"

"What is the matter, Miss French?"

"Have I lost your respect? Is it that that you mean?"

"Certainly not, Miss French."

"Do not call me Miss French, or I shall be sure that you condemn me. Miss French sounds so very cold. You used to call me—Bella." That was quite true; but it was long ago, thought Mr. Gibson,—before the monster had been attached. "Will you not call me Bella now?"

He thought that he had rather not; and yet, how was he to avoid it? On a sudden he became very crafty. Had it not been for the sharpness of his mother wit, he would certainly have been landed at that moment. "As you truly observed just now," he said, "the tongues of people are so malignant. There are little birds that hear everything."

"I don't care what the little birds hear," said Miss French, through her tears. "I am a very unhappy girl;—I know that; and I don't care what anybody says. It is nothing to me what anybody says. I know what I feel." At this moment there was some dash of truth about her. The fish was so very heavy on hand that, do what she would, she could not land him. Her hopes before this had been very low,—hopes that had once been high; but they had been depressed gradually; and, in the slow, dull routine of her daily life, she had learned to bear disappointment by degrees, without sign of outward suffering, without consciousness of acute

pain. The task of her life had been weary, and the wished-for goal was ever becoming more and more distant; but there had been still a chance, and she had fallen away into a lethargy of lessening expectation, from which joy, indeed, had been banished, but in which there had been nothing of agony. Then had come upon the whole house at Heavitree the great Stanbury peril, and, arising out of that, had sprung new hopes to Arabella, which made her again capable of all the miseries of a foiled ambition. She could again be patient, if patience might be of any service; but in such a condition an eternity of patience is simply suicidal. She was willing to work hard, but how could she work harder than she had worked. Poor young woman,—perishing beneath an incubus which a false idea of fashion had imposed on her!

"I hope I have said nothing that makes you unhappy," pleaded Mr. Gibson. "I'm sure I haven't meant it."

"But you have," she said. "You make me very unhappy. You condemn me. I see you do. And if I have done wrong it has been all because——Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!"

"But who says you have done wrong?"

"You won't call me, Bella,—because you say the little birds will hear it. If I don't care for the little birds, why should you?"

There is no question more difficult than this for a gentleman to answer. Circumstances do not often admit of its being asked by a lady with that courageous simplicity which had come upon Miss French in this moment of her agonising struggle; but nevertheless it is one which, in a more complicated form, is often put,

and to which some reply, more or less complicated, is expected. "If I, a woman, can dare, for your sake, to encounter the public tongue, will you, a man, be afraid?" The true answer, if it could be given, would probably be this; "I am afraid, though a man, because I have much to lose and little to get. You are not afraid, though a woman, because you have much to get and little to lose." But such an answer would be uncivil, and is not often given. Therefore men shuffle and lie, and tell themselves that in love,—love here being taken to mean all antinuptial contests between man and woman,—everything is fair. Mr. Gibson had the above answer in his mind, though he did not frame it into words. He was neither sufficiently brave nor sufficiently cruel to speak to her in such language. There was nothing for him, therefore, but that he must shuffle and lie.

"I only meant," said he, "that I would not for worlds do anything to make you uneasy."

She did not see how she could again revert to the subject of her own Christian name. She had made her little tender, loving request, and it had been refused. Of course she knew that it had been refused as a matter of caution. She was not angry with him because of his caution, as she had expected him to be cautious. The barriers over which she had to climb were no more than she had expected to find in her way;—but they were so very high and so very difficult! Of course she was aware that he would escape if he could. She was not angry with him on that account. Anger could not have helped her. Indeed, she did not price herself highly enough to make her feel that she would be justified in being angry. It was

natural enough that he shouldn't want her. She knew herself to be a poor, thin, vapid, tawdry creature, with nothing to recommend her to any man except a sort of second-rate, provincial-town fashion which,—infatuated as she was,—she attributed in a great degree to the thing she carried on her head. She knew nothing. She could do nothing. She possessed nothing. She was not angry with him because he so evidently wished to avoid her. But she thought that if she could only be successful she would be good and loving and obedient,—and that it was fair for her at any rate to try. Each created animal must live and get its food by the gifts which the Creator has given to it, let those gifts be as poor as they may,—let them be even as distasteful as they may to other members of the great created family. The rat, the toad, the slug, the flea, must each live according to its appointed mode of existence. Animals which are parasites by nature can only live by attaching themselves to life that is strong. To Arabella Mr. Gibson would be strong enough, and it seemed to her that if she could fix herself permanently upon his strength, that would be her proper mode of living. She was not angry with him because he resisted the attempt, but she had nothing of conscience to tell her that she should spare him as long as there remained to her a chance of success. And should not her plea of excuse, her justification be admitted? There are tormentors as to which no man argues that they are iniquitous, though they be very troublesome. He either rids himself of them, or suffers as quiescently as he may.

"We used to be such—great—friends," she said, ll crying, "and I am afraid you don't like me a bit ow."

"Indeed I do;—I have always liked you. But——"

"But what? Do tell me what the but means. I will do anything that you bid me."

Then it occurred to him that if, after such a promise, he were to confide to her his feeling that the chignon which she wore was ugly and unbecoming, she would probably be induced to change her mode of head-dress. It was a foolish idea, because, had he followed it out, he would have seen that compliance on her part in such a matter could only be given with the distinct understanding that a certain reward should be the consequence. When an unmarried gentleman calls upon an unmarried lady to change the fashion of her personal adornments, the unmarried lady has a right to expect that the unmarried gentleman means to make her his wife. But Mr. Gibson had no such meaning; and was led into error by the necessity for sudden action. When she offered to do anything that he might bid her do, he could not take up his hat and go away. She looked up into his face, expecting that he would give her some order;—and he fell into the temptation that was spread for him.

"If I might say a word,——" he began.

"You may say anything," she exclaimed.

"If I were you I don't think——"

"You don't think what, Mr. Gibson?"

He found it to be a matter very difficult of approach. "Do you know, I don't think the fashion that has come up about wearing your hair quite suits you,—not so well as the way you used to do it." She became on a sudden very red in the face, and he thought that she was angry. Vexed she was, but still, accompanying her vexation, there was a remembrance that

she was achieving victory even by her own humiliation. She loved her chignon; but she was ready to abandon even that for him. Nevertheless she could not speak for a moment or two, and he was forced to continue his criticism. "I have no doubt those things are very becoming and all that, and I dare say they are comfortable."

"Oh, very," she said.

"But there was a simplicity that I liked about the other."

Could it be then that for the last five years he had stood aloof from her because she had arrayed herself in fashionable attire? She was still very red in the face, still suffering from wounded vanity, still conscious of that soreness which affects us all when we are made to understand that we are considered to have failed there, where we have most thought that we excelled. But her woman art enabled her quickly to conceal the pain. "I have made a promise," she said, "and you will find that I will keep it."

"What promise?" asked Mr. Gibson.

"I said that I would do as you bade me, and so I will. I would have done it sooner if I had known that you wished it. I would never have worn it at all if I had thought that you disliked it."

"I think that a little of them is very nice," said Mr. Gibson. Mr. Gibson was certainly an awkward man. But there are men so awkward that it seems to be their especial province to say always the very worst thing at the very worst moment.

She became redder than ever as she was thus told of the hugeness of her favourite ornament. She was almost angry now. But she restrained herself, thinking

perhaps of how she might teach him taste in days to come as he was teaching her now. "I will change it to-morrow," she said with a smile. "You come and see to-morrow."

Upon this he got up and took his hat and made his escape, assuring her that he would come and see her on the morrow. She let him go now without any attempt at further tenderness. Certainly she had gained much during the interview. He had as good as told her in what had been her offence, and of course, when she had remedied that offence, he could hardly refuse to return to her. She got up as soon as she was alone, and looked at her head in the glass, and told herself that the pity would be great. It was not that the chignon was in itself a thing of beauty, but that it imparted so unmistakable an air of fashion! It divested her of that dowdiness which she feared above all things, and enabled her to hold her own among other young women, without feeling that she was absolutely destitute of attraction. There had been a certain homage paid to it, which she had recognised and enjoyed. But it was her ambition to hold her own, not among young women, but among clergymen's wives, and she would certainly obey his orders. She could not make the attempt now because of the complications; but she certainly would make it before she laid her head on the pillow,—and would explain to Camilla that it was a little joke between herself and Mr. Gibson.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Gibson is Punished.

Miss Stanbury was divine in her wrath, and became more and more so daily as new testimony reached her of dishonesty on the part of the Frenches and of treachery on the part of Mr. Gibson. And these people, so empty, so vain, so weak, were getting the better of her, were conquering her, were robbing her of her prestige and her ancient glory, simply because she herself was too generous to speak out and tell the truth! There was a martyrdom to her in this which was almost unendurable.

Now there came to her one day at luncheon time, —on the day succeeding that on which Miss French had promised to sacrifice her chignon,—a certain Mrs. Clifford from Budleigh Salterton, to whom she was much attached. Perhaps the distance of Budleigh Salterton from Exeter added somewhat to this affection, so that Mrs. Clifford was almost closer to our friend's heart even than Mrs. MacHugh, who lived just at the other end of the cathedral. And in truth Mrs. Clifford was a woman more serious in her mode of thought than Mrs. MacHugh, and one who had more in common with Miss Stanbury than that other lady. Mrs. Clifford had been a Miss Noel of Doddiscombe Leigh, and she and Miss Stanbury had been engaged to be married at the same time,—each to a man of fortune. One match had been completed in the ordinary course of matches. What had been the course of the other we already know. But the friendship had been maintained on very close terms. Mrs. MacHugh was a Gallio at heart, anxious

chiefly to remove from herself,—and from her friends also,—all the troubles of life, and make things smooth and easy. She was one who disregarded great questions; who cared little or nothing what people said of her; who considered nothing worth the trouble of a fight;—Epicuri de grege porca. But there was nothing swinish about Mrs. Clifford of Budleigh Salterton. She took life thoroughly in earnest. She was a Tory who sorrowed heartily for her country, believing that it was being brought to ruin by the counsels of evil men. She prayed daily to be delivered from dissenters, radicals, and wolves in sheep's clothing,—by which latter bad name she meant especially a certain leading politician of the day who had, with the cunning of the devil, tempted and perverted the virtue of her own political friends. And she was one who thought that the slightest breath of scandal on a young woman's name should be stopped at once. An antique, pure-minded, anxious, self-sacrificing matron was Mrs. Clifford, and very dear to the heart of Miss Stanbury.

After lunch was over on the day in question Mrs. Clifford got Miss Stanbury into some closet retirement, and there spoke her mind as to the things which were being said. It had been asserted in her presence by Camilla French that she, Camilla, was authorised by Mr. Gibson to declare that he had never thought of proposing to Dorothy Stanbury, and that Miss Stanbury had been "labouring under some strange misapprehension in the matter." "Now, my dear, I don't care very much for the young lady in question," said Mrs. Clifford, alluding to Camilla Erench.

"Very little, indeed, I should think," said Miss Stanbury, with a shake of her head.

"Quite true, my dear,—but that does not make the words out of her mouth the less efficacious for evil. She clearly insinuated that you had endeavoured to make up a match between this gentleman and your niece, and that you had failed." So much was at least true. Miss Stanbury felt this, and felt also that she could not explain the truth, even to her dear old friend. In the midst of her divine wrath she had acknowledged to herself that she had brought Mr. Gibson into his difficulty, and that it would not become her to tell any one of his failure. And in this matter she did not herself accuse Mr. Gibson. She believed that the lie originated with Camilla French, and it was against Camilla that her wrath raged the fiercest.

"She is a poor, mean, disappointed thing," said Miss Stanbury.

"Very probably;—but I think I should ask her to hold her tongue about Miss Dorothy," said Mrs. Clifford.

The consultation in the closet was carried on for about half-an-hour, and then Miss Stanbury put on her bonnet and shawl and descended into Mrs. Clifford's carriage. The carriage took the Heavitree road, and deposited Miss Stanbury at the door of Mrs. French's house. The walk home from Heavitree would be nothing, and Mrs. Clifford proceeded on her way, having given this little help in counsel and conveyance to her friend. Mrs. French was at home, and Miss Stanbury was shown up into the room in which the three ladies were sitting.

The reader will doubtless remember the promise which Arabella had made to Mr. Gibson. That promise she had already fulfilled,—to the amazement of her

mother and sister; and when Miss Stanbury entered the room the elder daughter of the family was seen without her accustomed head gear. If the truth is to be owned, Miss Stanbury gave the poor young woman no credit for her new simplicity, but put down the deficiency to the charge of domestic slatternliness. She was unjust enough to declare afterwards that she had found Arabella French only half dressed at between three and four o'clock in the afternoon! From which this lesson may surely be learned,—that though the way down Avernus may be, and customarily is, made with great celerity, the return journey, if made at all, must be made slowly. A young woman may commence in chignons by attaching any amount of an edifice to her head; but the reduction should be made by degrees. Arabella's edifice had, in Miss Stanbury's eyes, been the ugliest thing in art that she had known; but, now, its absence offended her, and she most untruly declared that she had come upon the young woman in the middle of the day just out of her bed-room and almost in her dressing-gown.

And the whole French family suffered a diminution of power from the strange phantasy which had come upon Arabella. They all felt, in sight of the enemy, that they had to a certain degree lowered their flag. One of the ships, at least, had shown signs of striking, and this element of weakness made itself felt through the whole fleet. Arabella, herself, when she saw Miss Stanbury, was painfully conscious of her head, and wished that she had postponed the operation till the evening. She smiled with a faint watery smile, and was aware that something ailed her.

The greetings at first were civil, but very formal,

as are those between nations which are nominally at peace, but which are waiting for a sign at which each may spring at the other's throat. In this instance the Juno from the Close had come quite prepared to declare her casus belli as complete, and to fling down her gauntlet, unless the enemy should at once yield to her everything demanded with an abject submission. "Mrs. French," she said, "I have called to-day for a particular purpose, and I must address myself chiefly to Miss Camilla."

"Oh, certainly," said Mrs. French.

"I shall be delighted to hear anything from you, Miss Stanbury," said Camilla,—not without an air of bravado. Arabella said nothing, but she put her hand up almost convulsively to the back of her head.

"I have been told to-day by a friend of mine, Miss Camilla," began Miss Stanbury, "that you declared yourself, in her presence, authorised by Mr. Gibson to make a statement about my niece Dorothy."

"May I ask who was your friend?" demanded Mrs. French.

"It was Mrs. Clifford, of course," said Camilla. "There is nobody else would try to make difficulties."

"There need be no difficulty at all, Miss Camilla," said Miss Stanbury, "if you will promise me that you will not repeat the statement. It can't be true."

"But it is true," said Camilla.

"What is true?" asked Miss Stanbury, surprised by the audacity of the girl.

"It is true that Mr. Gibson authorised us to state what I did state when Mrs. Clifford heard me."

"And what was that?"

"Only this,—that people had been saying all about

Exeter that he was going to be married to a young lady, and that as the report was incorrect, and as he had never had the remotest idea in his mind of making the young lady his wife,—" Camilla, as she said this, spoke with a great deal of emphasis, putting forward her chin and shaking her head,—"and as he thought it was uncomfortable both for the young lady and for himself, and as there was nothing in it the least in the world,—nothing at all, no glimmer of a foundation for the report, it would be better to have it denied everywhere. That is what I said; and we had authority from the gentleman himself. Arabella can say the same, and so can mamma;—only mamma did not hear him." Nor had Camilla heard him, but that incident she did not mention.

The circumstances were, in Miss Stanbury's judgment, becoming very remarkable. She did not for a moment believe Camilla. She did not believe that Mr. Gibson had given to either of the Frenches any justification for the statement just made. But Camilla had been so much more audacious than Miss Stanbury had expected, that that lady was for a moment struck dumb. "I'm sure, Miss Stanbury," said Mrs. French, "we don't want to give any offence to your niece,—very far from it."

"My niece doesn't care about it two straws," said Miss Stanbury. "It is I that care. And I care very much. The things that have been said have been altogether false."

"How false, Miss Stanbury?" asked Camilla.

"Altogether false,—as false as they can be."

"Mr. Gibson must know his own mind," said Camilla.

"My dear, there's a little disappointment," said Miss French, "and it don't signify."

"There's no disappointment at all," said Miss Stanbury, "and it does signify very much. Now that I've begun, I'll go to the bottom of it. If you say that Mr. Gibson told you to make these statements, I'll go to Mr. Gibson. I'll have it out somehow."

"You may have what you like out for us, Miss Stanbury," said Camilla.

"I don't believe Mr. Gibson said anything of the kind."

"That's civil," said Camilla.

"But why shouldn't he?" asked Arabella.

"There were the reports, you know," said Mrs. French.

"And why shouldn't he deny them when there wasn't a word of truth in them?" continued Camilla. "For my part, I think the gentleman is bound for the lady's sake to declare that there's nothing in it when there is nothing in it." This was more than Miss Stanbury could bear. Hitherto the enemy had seemed to have the best of it. Camilla was firing broadside after broadside, as though she was assured of victory. Even Mrs. French was becoming courageous; and Arabella was forgetting the place where her chignon ought to have been. "I really do not know what else there is for me to say," remarked Camilla, with a toss of her head, and an air of impudence that almost drove poor Miss Stanbury frantic.

It was on her tongue to declare the whole truth, but she refrained. She had schooled herself on this subject vigorously. She would not betray Mr. Gibson. Had she known all the truth,—or had she believed

Camilla French's version of the story,—there would have been no betrayal. But looking at the matter with such knowledge as she had at present, she did not even yet feel herself justified in declaring that Mr. Gibson had offered his hand to her niece, and had been refused. She was, however, sorely tempted. "Very well, ladies," she said. "I shall now see Mr. Gibson, and ask him whether he did give you authority to make such statements as you have been spreading abroad everywhere." Then the door of the room was opened, and in a moment Mr. Gibson was among them. He was true to his promise, and had come to see Arabella with her altered head-dress;—but he had come at this hour thinking that escape in the morning would be easier and quicker than it might have been in the evening. His mind had been full of Arabella and her head-dress even up to the moment of his knocking at the door; but all that was driven out of his brain at once when he saw Miss Stanbury.

"Here is Mr. Gibson himself," said Mrs. French.

"How do you do, Mr. Gibson?" said Miss Stanbury, with a very stately courtesy. They had never met since the day on which he had been, as he stated, turned out of Miss Stanbury's house. He now bowed to her; but there was no friendly greeting, and the Frenches were able to congratulate themselves on the apparent loyalty to themselves of the gentleman who stood among them. "I have come here, Mr. Gibson," continued Miss Stanbury, "to put a small matter right in which you are concerned."

"It seems to me to be the most insignificant thing in the world," said Camilla.

"Very likely," said Miss Stanbury. "But it is not

insignificant to me. Miss Camilla French has asserted publicly that you have authorised her to make a statement about my niece Dorothy."

Mr. Gibson looked into Camilla's face doubtingly, inquisitively, almost piteously. "You had better let her go on," said Camilla. "She will make a great many mistakes, no doubt, but you had better let her go on to the end."

"I have made no mistake as yet, Miss Camilla. She so asserted, Mr. Gibson, in the hearing of a friend of mine, and she repeated the assertion here in this room to me just before you came in. She says that you have authorised her to declare that—that—that,—I had better speak it out plainly at once."

"Much better," said Camilla.

"That you never entertained an idea of offering your hand to my niece." Miss Stanbury paused, and Mr. Gibson's jaw fell visibly. But he was not expected to speak as yet; and Miss Stanbury continued her accusation. "Beyond that, I don't want to mention my niece's name, if it can be avoided."

"But it can't be avoided," said Camilla.

"If you please, I will continue. Mr. Gibson will understand me. I will not, if I can help it, mention my niece's name again, Mr. Gibson. But I still have that confidence in you that I do not think that you would have made such a statement in reference to yourself and any young lady,—unless it were some young lady who had absolutely thrown herself at your head." And in saying this she paused, and looked very hard at Camilla.

"That's just what Dorothy Stanbury has been doing," said Camilla.

"She has been doing nothing of the kind, and you know she hasn't," said Miss Stanbury, raising her arm as though she were going to strike her opponent. "But I am quite sure, Mr. Gibson, that you never could have authorised these young ladies to make such an assertion publicly on your behalf. Whatever there may have been of misunderstanding between you and me, I can't believe that of you." Then she paused for a reply. "If you will be good enough to set us right on that point, I shall be obliged to you."

Mr. Gibson's position was one of great discomfort. He had given no authority to any one to make such a statement. He had said nothing about Dorothy Stanbury to Camilla; but he had told Arabella, when hard pressed by that lady, that he did not mean to propose to Dorothy. He could not satisfy Miss Stanbury because he feared Arabella. He could not satisfy the Frenches because he feared Miss Stanbury. "I really do not think," said he, "that we ought to talk about a young lady in this way."

"That's my opinion too," said Camilla; "but Miss Stanbury will."

"Exactly so. Miss Stanbury will," said that lady. "Mr. Gibson, I insist upon it, that you tell me whether you did give any such authority to Miss Camilla French, or to Miss French."

"I wouldn't answer her, if I were you," said Camilla.

"I really don't think this can do any good," said Mrs. French.

"And it is so very harassing to our nerves," said Arabella.

"Nerves! Pooh!" exclaimed Miss Stanbury. "Now, Mr. Gibson, I am waiting for an answer."

"My dear Miss Stanbury, I really think it better,—the situation is so peculiar, and, upon my word, I hardly know how not to give offence, which I wouldn't do for the world."

"Do you mean to tell me that you won't answer my question?" demanded Miss Stanbury.

"I really think that I had better hold my tongue," pleaded Mr. Gibson.

"You are quite right, Mr. Gibson," said Camilla.

"Indeed, it is wisest," said Mrs. French.

"I don't see what else he can do," said Arabella.

Then was Miss Stanbury driven altogether beyond her powers of endurance. "If that be so," said she, "I must speak out, though I should have preferred to hold my tongue. Mr. Gibson did offer to my niece the week before last,—twice, and was refused by her. My niece, Dorothy, took it into her head that she did not like him; and, upon my word, I think she was right. We should have said nothing about this,—not a word; but when these false assertions are made on Mr. Gibson's alleged authority, and Mr. Gibson won't deny it, I must tell the truth." Then there was silence among them for a few seconds, and Mr. Gibson struggled hard, but vainly, to clothe his face in a pleasant smile. "Mr. Gibson, is that true?" said Miss Stanbury. But Mr Gibson made no reply. "It is as true as heaven," said Miss Stanbury, striking her hand upon the table. "And now you had better, all of you, hold your tongues about my niece, and she will hold her tongue about you. And as for Mr. Gibson,—anybody who wants him after this is welcome to him for us. Good-

morning, Mrs. French; good-morning, young ladies." And so she stalked out of the room, and out of the house, and walked back to her house in the Close.

"Mamma," said Arabella as soon as the enemy was gone, "I have got such a headache that I think I will go up-stairs."

"And I will go with you, dear," said Camilla.

Mr. Gibson, before he left the house, confided his secret to the maternal ears of Mrs. French. He certainly had been allured into making an offer to Dorothy Stanbury, but was ready to atone for this crime by marrying her daughter,—Camilla,—as soon as might be convenient. He was certainly driven to make this declaration by intense cowardice,—not to excuse himself, for in that there could be no excuse;—but how else should he dare to suggest that he might as well leave the house? "Shall I tell the dear girl?" asked Mrs. French. But Mr. Gibson requested a fortnight, in which to consider how the proposition had best be made.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Brooke Burgess after Supper.

Brooke Burgess was a clerk in the office of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in London, and as such had to do with things very solemn, grave, and almost melancholy. He had to deal with the rents of episcopal properties, to correspond with clerical claimants, and to be at home with the circumstances of underpaid vicars and perpetual curates with much less than £300 a-year; but yet he was as jolly and pleasant at his desk as though he were busied about the collection of

the malt tax, or wrote his letters to admirals and captains instead of to deans and prebendaries. Brooke Burgess had risen to be a senior clerk, and was held in some respect in his office; but it was not perhaps for the amount of work he did, nor yet on account of the gravity of his demeanour, nor for the brilliancy of his intellect. But if not clever, he was sensible; though he was not a dragon of official virtue, he had a conscience;—and he possessed those small but most valuable gifts by which a man becomes popular among men. And thus it had come to pass in all those battles as to competitive merit which had taken place in his as in other public offices, that no one had ever dreamed of putting a junior over the head of Brooke Burgess. He was tractable, easy, pleasant, and therefore deservedly successful. All his brother clerks called him Brooke,—except the young lads who, for the first year or two of their service, still denominated him Mr. Burgess.

"Brooke," said one of his juniors, coming into his room and standing before the fireplace with a cigar in his mouth, "have you heard who is to be the new Commissioner?"

"Colenso, to be sure," said Brooke.

"What a lark that would be. And I don't see why he shouldn't. But it isn't Colenso. The name has just come down."

"And who is it?"

"Old Proudie, from Barchester."

"Why, we had him here years ago, and he resigned."

"But he's to come on again now for a spell. It always seems to me that the bishops ain't a bit of use

here. They only get blown up, and snubbed, and shoved into corners by the others."

"You young reprobate,—to talk of shoving an archbishop into a corner."

"Well,—don't they? It's only for the name of it they have them. There's the Bishop of Broomsgrove; —he's always sauntering about the place, looking as though he'd be so much obliged if somebody would give him something to do. He's always smiling, and so gracious,—just as if he didn't feel above half sure that he had any right to be where he is, and he thought that perhaps somebody was going to kick him."

"And so old Proudie is coming up again," said Brooke. "It certainly is very much the same to us whom they send. He'll get shoved into a corner, as you call it,—only that he'll go into the corner without any shoving." Then there came in a messenger with a card, and Brooke learned that Hugh Stanbury was waiting for him in the stranger's room. In performing the promise made to Dorothy, he had called upon her brother as soon as he was back in London, but had not found him. This now was the return visit.

"I thought I was sure to find you here," said Hugh.

"Pretty nearly sure from eleven till five," said Brooke. "A hard stepmother like the Civil Service does not allow one much chance of relief. I do get across to the club sometimes for a glass of sherry and a biscuit,—but here I am now, at any rate; and I'm very glad you have come." Then there was some talk between them about affairs at Exeter; but as they were interrupted before half an hour was over their heads

by a summons brought for Burgess from one of the secretaries, it was agreed that they should dine together at Burgess's club on the following day. "We can manage a pretty good beef-steak," said Brooke, "and have a fair glass of sherry. I don't think you can get much more than that anywhere nowadays,—unless you want a dinner for eight at three guineas a head. The magnificence of men has become so intolerable now that one is driven to be humble in one's self-defence." Stanbury assured his acquaintance that he was anything but magnificent in his own ideas, that cold beef and beer was his usual fare, and at last allowed the clerk to wait upon the secretary.

"I wouldn't have any other fellow to meet you," said Brooke as they sat at their dinners, "because in this way we can talk over the dear old woman at Exeter. Yes, our fellow does make good soup, and it's about all that he does do well. As for getting a potato properly boiled, that's quite out of the question. Yes, it is a good glass of sherry. I told you we'd a fairish tap of sherry on. Well, I was there, backwards and forwards, for nearly six weeks."

"And how did you get on with the old woman?"

"Like a house on fire," said Brooke.

"She didn't quarrel with you?"

"No,—upon the whole she did not. I always felt that it was touch and go. She might or she might not. Every now and then she looked at me, and said a sharp word, as though it was about to come. But I had determined when I went there altogether to disregard that kind of thing."

"It's rather important to you,— is it not?"

"You mean about her money?"

"Of course, I mean about her money." said Stanbury.

"It is important;—and so it was to you."

"Not in the same degree, or nearly so. And as for me, it was not on the cards that we shouldn't quarrel. I am so utterly a Bohemian in all my ideas of life, and she is so absolutely the reverse, that not to have quarrelled would have been hypocritical on my part or on hers. She had got it into her head that she had a right to rule my life; and, of course, she quarrelled with me when I made her understand that she should do nothing of the kind. Now, she won't want to rule you."

"I hope not."

"She has taken you up," continued Stanbury, "on altogether a different understanding. You are to her the representative of a family to whom she thinks she owes the restitution of the property which she enjoys. I was simply a member of her own family, to which she owes nothing. She thought it well to help one of us out of what she regarded as her private purse, and she chose me. But the matter is quite different with you."

"She might have given everything to you, as well as to me," said Brooke.

"That's not her idea. She conceives herself bound to leave all she has back to a Burgess, except anything she may save,—as she says, off her own back, or out of her own belly. She has told me so a score of times."

"And what did you say?"

"I always told her that, let her do as she would, I should never ask any question about her will."

"But she hates us all like poison,—except me," said Brooke. "I never knew people so absurdly hostile as are your aunt and my uncle Barty. Each thinks the other the most wicked person in the world."

"I suppose your uncle was hard upon her once."

"Very likely. He is a hard man,—and has, very warmly, all the feelings of an injured man. I suppose my uncle Brooke's will was a cruel blow to him. He professes to believe that Miss Stanbury will never leave me a shilling."

"He is wrong, then," said Stanbury.

"Oh yes;—he's wrong, because he thinks that that's her present intention. I don't know that he's wrong as to the probable result."

"Who will have it, then?"

"There are ever so many horses in the race," said Brooke. "I'm one."

"You're the favourite," said Stanbury.

"For the moment I am. Then there's yourself."

"I've been scratched, and am altogether out of the betting."

"And your sister," continued Brooke.

"She's only entered to run for the second money; and, if she'll trot over the course quietly, and not go the wrong side of the posts, she'll win that."

"She may do more than that. Then there's Martha."

"My aunt will never leave her money to a servant. What she may give to Martha would come from her own savings."

"The next is a dark horse, but one that wins a good many races of this kind. He's apt to come in with a fatal rush at the end."

"Who is it?"

"The hospitals. When an old lady finds in her latter days that she hates everybody, and fancies that the people around her are all thinking of her money, she's uncommon likely to indulge herself in a little bit of revenge, and solace herself with large-handed charity."

"But she's so good a woman at heart," said Hugh.

"And what can a good woman do better than promote hospitals?"

"She'll never do that. She's too strong. It's a maudlin sort of thing, after all, for a person to leave everything to a hospital."

"But people are maudlin when they're dying," said Brooke,—"or even when they think they're dying. How else did the Church get the estates, of which we are now distributing so bountifully some of the last remnants down at our office? Come into the next room, and we'll have a smoke."

They had their smoke, and then they went at half-price to the play; and, after the play was over, they eat three or four dozen of oysters between them. Brooke Burgess was a little too old for oysters at midnight in September; but he went through his work like a man. Hugh Stanbury's powers were so great, that he could have got up and done the same thing again, after he had been an hour in bed, without any serious inconvenience.

But, in truth, Brooke Burgess had still another word or two to say before he went to his rest. They supped somewhere near the Haymarket, and then he offered to walk home with Stanbury, to his chambers

in Lincoln's Inn. "Do you know that Mr. Gibson at Exeter?" he asked, as they passed through Leicester Square.

"Yes; I knew him. He was a sort of tame-cat parson at my aunt's house, in my days."

"Exactly;—but I fancy that has come to an end now. Have you heard anything about him lately?"

"Well;—yes I have," said Stanbury, feeling that dislike to speak of his sister which is common to most brothers when in company with other men.

"I suppose you've heard of it, and, as I was in the middle of it all, of course I couldn't but know all about it too. Your aunt wanted him to marry your sister."

"So I was told."

"But your sister didn't see it," said Brooke.

"So I understand," said Stanbury. "I believe my aunt was exceedingly liberal, and meant to do the best she could for poor Dorothy; but, if she didn't like him, I suppose she was right not to have him," said Hugh.

"Of course she was right," said Brooke, with a good deal of enthusiasm.

"I believe Gibson to be a very decent sort of fellow," said Stanbury.

"A mean, paltry dog," said Brooke. There had been a little whisky-toddy after the oysters, and Mr. Burgess was perhaps moved to a warmer expression of feeling than he might have displayed had he discussed this branch of the subject before supper. "I knew from the first that she would have nothing to say to him. He is such a poor creature!"

"I always thought well of him," said Stanbury, "and was inclined to think that Dolly might have done worse."

"It is hard to say what is the worst a girl might do; but I think she might do, perhaps, a little better."

"What do you mean?" said Hugh.

"I think I shall go down, and ask her to take myself."

"Do you mean it in earnest?"

"I do," said Brooke. "Of course, I hadn't a chance when I was there. She told me——"

"Who told you;—Dorothy?"

"No, your aunt;—she told me that Mr. Gibson was to marry your sister. You know your aunt's way. She spoke of it as though the thing were settled as soon as she had got it into her own head; and she was as hot upon it as though Mr. Gibson had been an archbishop. I had nothing to do then but to wait and see."

"I had no idea of Dolly being fought for by rivals."

"Brothers never think much of their sisters," said Brooke Burgess.

"I can assure you I think a great deal of Dorothy," said Hugh. "I believe her to be as sweet a woman as God ever made. She hardly knows that she has a self belonging to herself."

"I'm sure she doesn't," said Brooke.

"She is a dear, loving, sweet-tempered creature, who is only too ready to yield in all things."

"But she wouldn't yield about Gibson," said Brooke.

"How did she and my aunt manage?"

"Your sister simply said she couldn't,—and then that she wouldn't. I never thought from the first moment that she'd take that fellow. In the first place he can't say boo to a goose."

"But Dolly wouldn't want a man to say—boo."

"I'm not so sure of that, old fellow. At any rate I mean to try myself. Now,—what'll the old woman say?"

"She'll be pleased as Punch, I should think," said Stanbury.

"Either that;—or else she'll swear that she'll never speak another word to either of us. However, I shall go on with it."

"Does Dorothy know anything of this?" asked Stanbury.

"Not a word," said Brooke. "I came away a day or so after Gibson was settled; and as I had been talked to all through the affair by both of them, I couldn't turn round and offer myself the moment he was gone. You won't object;—will you?"

"Who; I?" said Stanbury. "I shall have no objection as long as Dolly pleases herself. Of course you know that we haven't as much as a brass farthing among us?"

"That won't matter if the old lady takes it kindly," said Brooke. Then they parted, at the corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Hugh as he went up to his own rooms, reflected with something of wonderment on the success of Dorothy's charms. She had always been the poor one of the family, the chick out of the nest which would most require assistance from the stronger birds; but it now appeared that she would become the first among all the Stanburys. Wealth had first flowed down upon the Stanbury family from the will of old Brooke Burgess; and it now seemed probable that poor Dolly would ultimately have the enjoyment of it all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Camilla triumphant.

It was now New Year's day, and there was some grief and perhaps more excitement in Exeter,—for it was rumoured that Miss Stanbury lay very ill at her house in the Close. But in order that our somewhat uneven story may run as smoothly as it may be made to do, the little history of the French family for the intervening months shall be told in this chapter, in order that it may be understood how matters were with them when the tidings of Miss Stanbury's severe illness first reached their house at Heavitree.

After that terrible scene in which Miss Stanbury had so dreadfully confounded Mr. Gibson by declaring the manner in which he had been rebuffed by Dorothy, the unfortunate clergyman had endeavoured to make his peace with the French family by assuring the mother that in very truth it was the dearest wish of his heart to make her daughter Camilla his wife. Mrs. French, who had ever been disposed to favour Arabella's ambition, well knowing its priority and ancient right, and who of late had been taught to consider that even Camilla had consented to waive any claim that she might have once possessed, could not refrain from the expression of some surprise. That he should be recovered at all out of the Stanbury clutches was very much to Mrs. French,—was so much that, had time been given her for consideration, she would have acknowledged to herself readily that the property had best be secured at once to the family, without incurring that amount of risk which must unquestionably attend

any attempt on her part to direct Mr. Gibson's purpose hither or thither. But the proposition came so suddenly, that time was not allowed to her to be altogether wise. "I thought it was poor Bella," she said, with something of a piteous whine in her voice. At the moment Mr. Gibson was so humble, that he was half inclined to give way even on that head. He felt himself to have been brought so low in the market by that terrible story of Miss Stanbury's,—which he had been unable either to contradict or to explain,—that there was but little power of fighting left in him. He was, however, just able to speak a word for himself, and that sufficed. "I hope there has been no mistake," he said; "but really it is Camilla that has my heart." Mrs. French made no rejoinder to this. It was so much to her to know that Mr. Gibson's heart was among them at all after what had occurred in the Close, that she acknowledged to herself after that moment of reflection that Arabella must be sacrificed for the good of the family interests. Poor, dear, loving, misguided, and spiritless mother! She would have given the blood out of her bosom to get husbands for her daughters, though it was not of her own experience that she had learned that of all worldly goods a husband is the best. But it was the possession which they had from their earliest years thought of acquiring, which they first expected, for which they had then hoped, and afterwards worked and schemed and striven with every energy,—and as to which they had at last almost despaired. And now Arabella's fire had been rekindled with a new spark, which, alas, was to be quenched so suddenly! "And am I to tell them?" asked Mrs. French, with a tremor in her voice. To this, however, Mr. Gibson demurred.

He said that for certain reasons he should like a fortnight's grace; and that at the end of the fortnight he would be prepared to speak. The interval was granted without further questions, and Mr. Gibson was allowed to leave the house.

After that Mrs. French was not very comfortable at home. As soon as Mr. Gibson had departed, Camilla at once returned to her mother and desired to know what had taken place. Was it true that the perjured man had proposed to that young woman in the Close? Mrs. French was not clever at keeping a secret, and she could not keep this by her own aid. She told all that happened to Camilla, and between them they agreed that Arabella should be kept in ignorance till the fatal fortnight should have passed. When Camilla was interrogated as to her own purpose, she said she should like a day to think of it. She took the twenty-four hours, and then made the following confession of her passion to her mother. "You see, mamma, I always liked Mr. Gibson,—always."

"So did Arabella, my dear,—before you thought of such things."

"I dare say that may be true, mamma; but that is not my fault. He came here among us on such sweetly intimate terms that the feeling grew up with me before I knew what it meant. As to any idea of cutting out Arabella, my conscience is quite clear. If I thought there had been anything really between them I would have gone anywhere,—to the top of a mountain,—rather than rob my sister of a heart that belonged to her."

"He has been so slow about it," said Mrs. French.

"I don't know about that," said Camilla. "Gentle-

men have to be slow, I suppose, when they think of their incomes. He only got St. Peter's-cum-Pumkin three years ago, and didn't know for the first year whether he could hold that and the minor canonry together. Of course a gentleman has to think of these things before he comes forward."

"My dear, he has been very backward."

"If I'm to be Mrs. Gibson, mamma, I beg that I mayn't hear anything said against him. Then there came all this about that young woman; and when I saw that Arabella took on so,—which I must say was very absurd,—I'm sure I put myself out of the way entirely. If I'd buried myself under the ground I couldn't have done it more. And it's my belief that what I've said, all for Arabella's sake, has put the old woman into such a rage that it has made a quarrel between him and the niece; otherwise that wouldn't be off. I don't believe a word of her refusing him, and never shall. Is it in the course of things, mamma?" Mrs. French shook her head. "Of course not. Then when you question him,—very properly,—he says that he's devoted to—poor me. If I was to refuse him, he wouldn't put up with Bella."

"I suppose not," said Mrs. French.

"He hates Bella. I've known it all along, though I wouldn't say so. If I were to sacrifice myself ever so it wouldn't be of any good,—and I shan't do it." In this way the matter was arranged.

At the end of the fortnight, however, Mr. Gibson did not come,—nor at the end of three weeks. Inquiries had of course been made, and it was ascertained that he had gone into Cornwall for a parson's holiday of thirteen days. That might be all very well. A

man might want the recruiting vigour of some change of air after such scenes as those Mr. Gibson had gone through with the Stanburys, and before his proposed encounter with new perils. And he was a man so tied by the leg that his escape could not be for any long time. He was back on the appointed Sunday, and on the Wednesday Mrs. French, under Camilla's instruction, wrote to him a pretty little note. He replied that he would be with her on the Saturday. It would then be nearly four weeks after the great day with Miss Stanbury, but no one would be inclined to quarrel with so short a delay as that. Arabella in the meantime had become fidgety and unhappy. She seemed to understand that something was expected, being quite unable to guess what that something might be. She was true throughout these days to the simplicity of head-gear which Mr. Gibson had recommended to her, and seemed in her questions to her mother and to Camilla to be more fearful of Dorothy Stanbury than of any other enemy. "Mamma, I think you ought to tell her," said Camilla more than once. But she had not been told when Mr. Gibson came on the Saturday. It may truly be said that the poor mother's pleasure in the prospects of one daughter was altogether destroyed by the anticipation of the other daughter's misery. Had Mr. Gibson made Dorothy Stanbury his wife they could have all comforted themselves together by the heat of their joint animosity.

He came on the Saturday, and it was so managed that he was closeted with Camilla before Arabella knew that he was in the house. There was a quarter of an hour during which his work was easy, and perhaps pleasant. When he began to explain his intention

Camilla, with the utmost frankness, informed him that her mother had told her all about it. Then she turned her face on one side and put her hand in his; he got his arm round her waist, gave her a kiss, and the thing was done. Camilla was fully resolved that after such a betrothal it should not be undone. She had behaved with sisterly forbearance, and would not now lose the reward of virtue. Not a word was said of Arabella at this interview till he was pressed to come and drink tea with them all that night. He hesitated a moment; and then Camilla declared, with something perhaps of imperious roughness in her manner, that he had better face it all at once. "Mamma will tell her, and she will understand," said Camilla. He hesitated again, but at last promised that he would come.

Whilst he was yet in the house Mrs. French had told the whole story to her poor elder daughter. "What is he doing with Camilla?" Arabella had asked with feverish excitement.

"Bella, darling;—don't you know?" said the mother.

"I know nothing. Everybody keeps me in the dark, and I am badly used. What is it that he is doing?" Then Mrs. French tried to take the poor young woman in her arms, but Arabella would not submit to be embraced. "Don't!" she exclaimed. "Leave me alone. Nobody likes me, or cares a bit about me! Why is Cammy with him there, all alone?"

"I suppose he is asking her—to be—his wife." Then Arabella threw herself in despair upon the bed, and wept without any further attempt at control over her feelings. It was a death-blow to her last hope, and all the world, as she looked upon the world then, was

over for her. "If I could have arranged it the other way, you know that I would," said the mother.

"Mamma," said Arabella jumping up, "he shan't do it. He hasn't a right. And as for her,—Oh, that she should treat me in this way! Didn't he tell me the other night, when he drank tea here with me alone——"

"What did he tell you, Bella?"

"Never mind. Nothing shall ever make me speak to him again;—not if he married her three times over; nor to her. She is a nasty, sly, good-for-nothing thing!"

"But, Bella——"

"Don't talk to me, mamma. There never was such a thing done before since people—were—people at all. She has been doing it all the time. I know she has."

Nevertheless Arabella did sit down to tea with the two lovers that night. There was a terrible scene between her and Camilla; but Camilla held her own; and Arabella, being the weaker of the two, was vanquished by the expenditure of her own small energies. Camilla argued that as her sister's chance was gone, and as the prize had come in her own way, there was no good reason why it should be lost to the family altogether, because Arabella could not win it. When Arabella called her a treacherous vixen and a heartless, profligate hussy, she spoke out freely, and said that she wasn't going to be abused. A gentleman to whom she was attached had asked her for her hand, and she had given it. If Arabella chose to make herself a fool she might,—but what would be the effect? Simply that all the world would know that she, Ara-

bella, was disappointed. Poor Bella at last gave way, put on her discarded chignon, and came down to tea. Mr. Gibson was already in the room when she entered it. "Arabella," he said, getting up to greet her, "I hope you will congratulate me." He had planned his little speech and his manner of making it, and had wisely decided that in this way might he best get over the difficulty.

"Oh yes;—of course," she said, with a little giggle, and then a sob, and then a flood of tears.

"Dear Bella feels these things so strongly," said Mrs. French.

"We have never been parted yet," said Camilla. Then Arabella tapped the head of the sofa three or four times sharply with her knuckles. It was the only protest against the reading of the scene which Camilla had given of which she was capable at that moment. After that Mrs. French gave out the tea, Arabella curled herself upon the sofa as though she were asleep, and the two lovers settled down to proper lover-like conversation.

The reader may be sure that Camilla was not slow in making the fact of her engagement notorious through the city. It was not probably true that the tidings of her success had anything to do with Miss Stanbury's illness; but it was reported by many that such was the case. It was in November that the arrangement was made, and it certainly was true that Miss Stanbury was rather ill about the same time. "You know, you naughty Lothario, that you did give her some ground to hope that she might dispose of her unfortunate niece," said Camilla playfully to her own one, when his illness was discussed between them. "But you are

caught now, and your wings are clipped, and you are never to be a naughty Lothario again." The clerical Don Juan bore it all, awkwardly indeed, but with good humour, and declared that all his troubles of that sort were over, now and for ever. Nevertheless he did not name the day, and Camilla began to feel that there might be occasion for a little more of that imperious roughness which she had at her command.

November was nearly over and nothing had been fixed about the day. Arabella never condescended to speak to her sister on the subject; but on more than one occasion made some inquiry of her mother. And she came to perceive, or to think that she perceived, that her mother was still anxious on the subject. "I shouldn't wonder if he wasn't off some day now," she said at last to her mother.

"Don't say anything so dreadful, Bella."

"It would serve Cammy quite right, and it's just what he's likely to do."

"It would kill me," said the mother.

"I don't know about killing," said Arabella; "it's nothing to what I've had to go through. I shouldn't pretend to be sorry if he were to go to Hong-Kong to-morrow."

But Mr. Gibson had no idea of going to Hong-Kong. He was simply carrying out his little scheme for securing the advantages of a "long day." He was fully resolved to be married, and was contented to think that his engagement was the best thing for him. To one or two male friends he spoke of Camilla as the perfection of female virtue, and entertained no smallest idea of ultimate escape. But a "long day" is often a convenience. A bill at three months sits easier

on a man than one at sixty days; and a bill at six months is almost as little of a burden as no bill at all.

But Camilla was resolved that some day should be fixed. "Thomas," she said to her lover one morning, as they were walking home together after service at the cathedral, "isn't this rather a fool's Paradise of ours?"

"How a fool's Paradise?" asked the happy Thomas.

"What I mean is, dearest, that we ought to fix something. Mamma is getting uneasy about her own plans."

"In what way, dearest?"

"About a thousand things. She can't arrange anything till our plans are made. Of course there are little troubles about money when people ain't rich." Then it occurred to her that this might seem to be a plea for postponing rather than for hurrying the marriage, and she mended her argument. "The truth is, Thomas, she wants to know when the day is to be fixed, and I've promised to ask. She said she'd ask you herself, but I wouldn't let her do that."

"We must think about it, of course," said Thomas.

"But, my dear, there has been plenty of time for thinking. What do you say to January?" This was on the last day of November.

"January!" exclaimed Thomas, in a tone that betrayed no triumph. "I couldn't get my services arranged for in January."

"I thought a clergyman could always manage that for his marriage," said Camilla.

"Not in January. Besides, I was thinking you would like to be away in warmer weather."

They were still in November, and he was thinking

of postponing it till the summer! Camilla immediately perceived how necessary it was that she should be plain with him. "We shall not have warm weather, as you call it, for a very long time, Thomas;—and I don't think that it would be wise to wait for the weather at all. Indeed, I've begun to get my things for doing it in the winter. Mamma said that she was sure January would be the very latest. And it isn't as though we had to get furniture or anything of that kind. Of course a lady shouldn't be pressing." She smiled sweetly and leaned on his arm as she said this. "But I hate all girlish nonsense and that kind of thing. It is such a bore to be kept waiting. I'm sure there's nothing to prevent it coming off in February."

The 31st of March was fixed before they reached Heavitree, and Camilla went into her mother's house a happy woman. But Mr. Gibson, as he went home, thought that he had been hardly used. Here was a girl who hadn't a shilling of money,—not a shilling till her mother died,—and who already talked about his house, and his furniture, and his income as if it were all her own! Circumstanced as she was, what right had she to press for an early day? He was quite sure that Arabella would have been more discreet and less exacting. He was very angry with his dear Cammy as he went across the Close to his house.

CHAPTER XIX.

Shewing what happened during Miss Stanbury's Illness.

It was on Christmas-day that Sir Peter Mancrudy, the highest authority on such matters in the west of England, was sent for to see Miss Stanbury; and Sir Peter had acknowledged that things were very serious. He took Dorothy on one side, and told her that Mr. Martin, the ordinary practitioner, had treated the case, no doubt, quite wisely throughout; that there was not a word to be said against Mr. Martin, whose experience was great, and whose discretion was undeniable; but, nevertheless,—at least it seemed to Dorothy that this was the only meaning to be attributed to Sir Peter's words,—Mr. Martin had in this case taken one line of treatment, when he ought to have taken another. The plan of action was undoubtedly changed, and Mr. Martin became very fidgety, and ordered nothing without Sir Peter's sanction. Miss Stanbury was suffering from bronchitis, and a complication of diseases about her throat and chest. Barty Burgess declared to more than one acquaintance in the little parlour behind the bank, that she would go on drinking four or five glasses of new port wine every day, in direct opposition to Martin's request. Camilla French heard the report, and repeated it to her lover, and perhaps another person or two, with an expression of her assured conviction that it must be false,—at any rate, as regarded the fifth glass. Mrs. MacHugh, who saw Martha daily, was much frightened. The peril of such a friend disturbed equally the repose and the pleasures of her life. Mrs. Clifford was often at Miss Stanbury's bed-

side,—and would have sat there reading for hours together, had she not been made to understand by Martha that Miss Stanbury preferred that Miss Dorothy should read to her. The sick woman received the Sacrament weekly,—not from Mr. Gibson, but from the hands of another minor canon; and, though she never would admit her own danger, or allow others to talk to her of it, it was known to them all that she admitted it to herself because she had, with much personal annoyance, caused a codicil to be added to her will. "As you didn't marry that man," she said to Dorothy, "I must change it again." It was in vain that Dorothy begged her not to trouble herself with such thoughts. "That's trash," said Miss Stanbury, angrily. "A person who has it is bound to trouble himself about it. You don't suppose I'm afraid of dying;—do you?" she added. Dorothy answered her with some commonplace,—declaring how strongly they all expected to see her as well as ever. "I'm not a bit afraid to die," said the old woman, wheezing, struggling with such voice as she possessed; "I'm not afraid of it, and I don't think I shall die this time; but I'm not going to have mistakes when I'm gone." This was on the eve of the new year, and on the same night she asked Dorothy to write to Brooke Burgess, and request him to come to Exeter. This was Dorothy's letter:—

"Exeter, 31st December, 186—.

"My dear Mr. Burgess,

"Perhaps I ought to have written before, to say that Aunt Stanbury is not as well as we could wish her; but, as I know that you cannot very well leave your office, I have thought it best not to say anything

to frighten you. But to-night Aunt herself has desired me to tell you that she thinks you ought to know that she is ill, and that she wishes you to come to Exeter for a day or two, if it is possible. Sir Peter Mancrudy has been here every day since Christmas-day, and I believe he thinks she may get over it. It is chiefly in the throat;—what they call bronchitis,—and she has got to be very weak with it, and at the same time very liable to inflammation. So I know that you will come if you can.

"Yours very truly,

"DOROTHY STANBURY.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you that she had her lawyer here with her the day before yesterday; but she does not seem to think that she herself is in danger. I read to her a good deal, and I think she is generally asleep; when I stop she wakes, and I don't believe she gets any other rest at all."

When it was known in Exeter that Brooke Burgess had been sent for, then the opinion became general that Miss Stanbury's days were numbered. Questions were asked of Sir Peter at every corner of the street; but Sir Peter was a discreet man, who could answer such questions without giving any information. If it so pleased God, his patient would die; but it was quite possible that she might live. That was the tenor of Sir Peter's replies,—and they were read in any light, according to the idiosyncrasies of the reader. Mrs. MacHugh was quite sure that the danger was over, and had a little game of cribbage on the sly with old Miss Wright;—for, during the severity of Miss Stan-

bury's illness, whist was put on one side in the vicinity of the Close. Barty Burgess was still obdurate, and shook his head. He was of opinion that they might soon gratify their curiosity, and see the last crowning iniquity of this wickedest of old women. Mrs. Clifford declared that it was all in the hands of God; but that she saw no reason why Miss Stanbury should not get about again. Mr. Gibson thought that it was all up with his late friend; and Camilla wished that at their last interview there had been more of charity on the part of one whom she had regarded in past days with respect and esteem. Mrs. French, despondent about everything, was quite despondent in this case. Martha almost despaired, and already was burdened with the cares of a whole wardrobe of solemn funereal clothing. She was seen peering in for half-an-hour at the windows and doorway of a large warehouse for the sale of mourning. Giles Hickbody would not speak above his breath, and took his beer standing; but Dorothy was hopeful, and really believed that her aunt would recover. Perhaps Sir Peter had spoken to her in terms less oracular than those which he used towards the public.

Brooke Burgess came, and had an interview with Sir Peter, and to him Sir Peter was under some obligation to speak plainly, as being the person whom Miss Stanbury recognised as her heir. So Sir Peter declared that his patient might perhaps live, and perhaps might die. "The truth is, Mr. Burgess," said Sir Peter, "a doctor doesn't know so very much more about these things than other people." It was understood that Brooke was to remain three days in Exeter, and then return to London. He would, of course, come

again if——if anything should happen. Sir Peter had been quite clear in his opinion, that no immediate result was to be anticipated,—either in the one direction or the other. His patient was doomed to a long illness; she might get over it, or she might succumb to it.

Dorothy and Brooke were thus thrown much together during these three days. Dorothy, indeed, spent most of her hours beside her aunt's bed, instigating sleep by the reading of a certain series of sermons in which Miss Stanbury had great faith; but nevertheless, there were some minutes in which she and Brooke were necessarily together. They eat their meals in each other's company, and there was a period in the evening, before Dorothy began her night-watch in her aunt's room, at which she took her tea while Martha was nurse in the room above. At this time of the day she would remain an hour or more with Brooke; and a great deal may be said between a man and a woman in an hour when the will to say it is there. Brooke Burgess had by no means changed his mind since he had declared it to Hugh Stanbury under the midnight lamps of Long Acre, when warmed by the influence of oysters and whisky toddy. The whisky toddy had in that instance brought out truth and not falsehood, —as is ever the nature of whisky toddy and similar dangerous provocatives. There is no saying truer than that which declares that there is truth in wine. Wine is a dangerous thing, and should not be made the exponent of truth, let the truth be good as it may; but it has the merit of forcing a man to show his true colours. A man who is a gentleman in his cups may be trusted to be a gentleman at all times. I trust that the severe censor will not turn upon me, and tell me

that no gentleman in these days is ever to be seen in his cups. There are cups of different degrees of depth; and cups do exist, even among gentlemen, and seem disposed to hold their own let the censor be ever so severe. The gentleman in his cups is a gentleman always; and the man who tells his friend in his cups that he is in love, does so because the fact has been very present to himself in his cooler and calmer moments. Brooke Burgess, who had seen Hugh Stanbury on two or three occasions since that of the oysters and toddy, had not spoken again of his regard for Hugh's sister; but not the less was he determined to carry out his plan and make Dorothy his wife if she would accept him. But could he ask her while the old lady was, as it might be, dying in the house? He put this question to himself as he travelled down to Exeter, and had told himself that he must be guided for an answer by circumstances as they might occur. Hugh had met him at the station as he started for Exeter, and there had been a consultation between them as to the propriety of bringing about, or of attempting to bring about, an interview between Hugh and his aunt. "Do whatever you like," Hugh had said. "I would go down to her at a moment's warning, if she should express a desire to see me."

On the first night of Brooke's arrival this question had been discussed between him and Dorothy. Dorothy had declared herself unable to give advice. If any message were given to her she would deliver it to her aunt; but she thought that anything said to her aunt on the subject had better come from Brooke himself. "You evidently are the person most important to her," Dorothy said, "and she would listen to you when she would not let any one

else say a word." Brooke promised that he would think of it; and then Dorothy tripped up to relieve Martha, dreaming nothing at all of that other doubt to which the important personage down-stairs was now subject. Dorothy was, in truth, very fond of the new friend she had made; but it had never occurred to her that he might be a possible suitor to her. Her old conception of herself,—that she was beneath the notice of any man,—had only been partly disturbed by the absolute fact of Mr. Gibson's courtship. She had now heard of his engagement with Camilla French, and saw in that complete proof that the foolish man had been induced to offer his hand to her by the promise of her aunt's money. If there had been a moment of exaltation,—a period in which she had allowed herself to think that she was, as other women, capable of making herself dear to a man,—it had been but a moment. And now she rejoiced greatly that she had not acceded to the wishes of one to whom it was so manifest that she had not made herself in the least dear.

On the second day of his visit, Brooke was summoned to Miss Stanbury's room at noon. She was forbidden to talk, and during a great portion of the day could hardly speak without an effort; but there would be half hours now and again in which she would become stronger than usual, at which time nothing that Martha and Dorothy could say would induce her to hold her tongue. When Brooke came to her on this occasion he found her sitting up in bed with a great shawl round her; and he at once perceived she was much more like her own self than on the former day. She told him that she had been an old fool for sending

for him, that she had nothing special to say to him, that she had made no alteration in her will in regard to him,—"except that I have done something for Dolly that will have to come out of your pocket, Brooke." Brooke declared that too much could not be done for a person so good, and dear, and excellent as Dorothy Stanbury, let it come out of whose pocket it might. "She is nothing to you, you know," said Miss Stanbury.

"She is a great deal to me," said Brooke.

"What is she?" asked Miss Stanbury.

"Oh;—a friend; a great friend."

"Well; yes. I hope it may be so. But she won't have anything that I haven't saved," said Miss Stanbury. "There are two houses at St. Thomas's; but I bought them myself, Brooke;—out of the income." Brooke could only declare that as the whole property was hers, to do what she liked with it as completely as though she had inherited it from her own father, no one could have any right to ask questions as to when or how this or that portion of the property had accrued. "But I don't think I'm going to die yet, Brooke," she said. "If it is God's will, I am ready. Not that I'm fit, Brooke. God forbid that I should ever think that. But I doubt whether I shall ever be fitter. I can go without repining if He thinks best to take me." Then he stood up by her bed-side, with his hand upon hers, and after some hesitation asked her whether she would wish to see her nephew Hugh. "No," said she, sharply. Brooke went on to say how pleased Hugh would have been to come to her. "I don't think much of death-bed reconciliations," said the old woman grimly. "I loved him dearly, but he

didn't love me, and I don't know what good we should do each other." Brooke declared that Hugh did love her; but he could not press the matter, and it was dropped.

On that evening at eight Dorothy came down to her tea. She had dined at the same table with Brooke that afternoon, but a servant had been in the room all the time and nothing had been said between them. As soon as Brooke had got his tea he began to tell the story of his failure about Hugh. He was sorry, he said, that he had spoken on the subject as it had moved Miss Stanbury to an acrimony which he had not expected.

"She always declares that he never loved her," said Dorothy. "She has told me so twenty times."

"There are people who fancy that nobody cares for them," said Brooke.

"Indeed there are, Mr. Burgess; and it is so natural."

"Why natural?"

"Just as it is natural that there should be dogs and cats that are petted and loved and made much of, and others that have to crawl through life as they can, cuffed and kicked and starved."

"That depends on the accident of possession," said Brooke.

"So does the other. How many people there are that don't seem to belong to anybody,—and if they do, they're no good to anybody. They're not cuffed exactly, or starved; but——"

"You mean that they don't get their share of affection?"

"They get perhaps as much as they deserve," said Dorothy.

"Because they're cross-grained, or ill-tempered, or disagreeable?"

"Not exactly that."

"What then?" asked Brooke.

"Because they're just nobodies. They are not anything particular to anybody, and so they go on living till they die. You know what I mean, Mr. Burgess. A man who is a nobody can perhaps make himself somebody,—or, at any rate, he can try; but a woman has no means of trying. She is a nobody, and a nobody she must remain. She has her clothes and her food, but she isn't wanted anywhere. People put up with her, and that is about the best of her luck. If she were to die somebody perhaps would be sorry for her, but nobody would be worse off. She doesn't earn anything or do any good. She is just there and that's all."

Brooke had never heard her speak after this fashion before, had never known her to utter so many consecutive words, or to put forward any opinion of her own with so much vigour. And Dorothy herself, when she had concluded her speech, was frightened by her own energy and grew red in the face, and shewed very plainly that she was half ashamed of herself. Brooke thought that he had never seen her look so pretty before, and was pleased by her enthusiasm. He understood perfectly that she was thinking of her own position, though she had entertained no idea that he would so read her meaning; and he felt that it was incumbent on him to undeceive her, and make her know that she was not one of those women who are "just there and that's all." "One does see such a woman as that now and again," he said.

"There are hundreds of them," said Dorothy. "And of course it can't be helped."

"Such as Arabella French," said he, laughing.

"Well,—yes; if she is one. It is very easy to see the difference. Some people are of use and are always doing things. There are others, generally women, who have nothing to do, but who can't be got rid of. It is a melancholy sort of feeling."

"You at least are not one of them."

"I didn't mean to complain about myself," she said. "I have got a great deal to make me happy."

"I don't suppose you regard yourself as an Arabella French," said he.

"How angry Miss French would be if she heard you. She considers herself to be one of the reigning beauties of Exeter."

"She has had a very long reign, and dominion of that sort to be successful ought to be short."

"That is spiteful, Mr. Burgess."

"I don't feel spiteful against her, poor woman. I own I do not love Camilla. Not that I begrudge Camilla her present prosperity."

"Nor I either, Mr. Burgess."

"She and Mr. Gibson will do very well together, I dare say."

"I hope they will," said Dorothy, "and I do not see any reason against it. They have known each other a long time."

"A very long time," said Brooke. Then he paused for a minute, thinking how he might best tell her that which he had now resolved should be told on this occasion. Dorothy finished her tea and got up as though she were about to go to her duty up-stairs. She had

been as yet hardly an hour in the room, and the period of her relief was not fairly over. But there had come something of a personal flavour in their conversation which prompted her, unconsciously, to leave him. She had, without any special indication of herself, included herself among that company of old maids who are born and live and die without that vital interest in the affairs of life which nothing but family duties, the care of children, or at least of a husband, will give to a woman. If she had not meant this she had felt it. He had understood her meaning, or at least her feeling, and had taken upon himself to assure her that she was not one of the company whose privations she had endeavoured to describe. Her instinct rather than her reason put her at once upon her guard, and she prepared to leave the room. "You are not going yet," he said.

"I think I might as well. Martha has so much to do, and she comes to me again at five in the morning."

"Don't go quite yet," he said, pulling out his watch. "I know all about the hours, and it wants twenty minutes to the proper time."

"There is no proper time, Mr. Burgess."

"Then you can remain a few minutes longer. The fact is, I've got something I want to say to you."

He was now standing between her and the door, so that she could not get away from him; but at this moment she was absolutely ignorant of his purpose, expecting nothing of love from him more than she would from Sir Peter Mancrudy. Her face had become flushed when she made her long speech, but there was no blush on it as she answered him now.

"Of course, I can wait," she said, "if you have anything to say to me."

"Well;—I have. I should have said it before, only that that other man was here." He was blushing now,—up to the roots of his hair, and felt that he was in a difficulty. There are men, to whom such moments of their lives are pleasurable, but Brooke Burgess was not one of them. He would have been glad to have had it done and over,—so that then he might take pleasure in it.

"What man?" asked Dorothy, in perfect innocence.

"Mr. Gibson, to be sure. I don't know that there is anybody else."

"Oh, Mr. Gibson. He never comes here now, and I don't suppose he will again. Aunt Stanbury is so very angry with him."

"I don't care whether he comes or not. What I mean is this. When I was here before, I was told that you were going—to marry him."

"But I wasn't."

"How was I to know that, when you didn't tell me? I certainly did know it after I came back from Dartmoor." He paused a moment, as though she might have a word to say. She had no word to say, and did not in the least know what was coming. She was so far from anticipating the truth, that she was composed and easy in her mind. "But all that is of no use at all," he continued. "When I was here before Miss Stanbury wanted you to marry Mr. Gibson; and, of course, I had nothing to say about it. Now I want you—to marry me."

"Mr. Burgess!"

"Dorothy, my darling, I love you better than all

the world. I do, indeed." As soon as he had commenced his protestations he became profuse enough with them, and made a strong attempt to support them by the action of his hands. But she retreated from him step by step, till she had regained her chair by the tea-table, and there she seated herself,—safely, as she thought; but he was close to her, over her shoulder, still continuing his protestations, offering up his vows, and imploring her to reply to him. She, as yet, had not answered him by a word, save by that one half-terrified exclamation of his name. "Tell me, at any rate, that you believe me, when I assure you that I love you," he said. The room was going round with Dorothy, and the world was going round, and there had come upon her so strong a feeling of the disruption of things in general, that she was at the moment anything but happy. Had it been possible for her to find that the last ten minutes had been a dream, she would at this moment have wished that it might become one. A trouble had come upon her, out of which she did not see her way. To dive among the waters in warm weather is very pleasant; there is nothing pleasanter. But when the young swimmer first feels the thorough immersion of his plunge, there comes upon him a strong desire to be quickly out again. He will remember afterwards how joyous it was; but now, at this moment, the dry land is everything to him. So it was with Dorothy. She had thought of Brooke Burgess as one of those bright ones of the world, with whom everything is happy and pleasant, whom everybody loves, who may have whatever they please, whose lines have been laid in pleasant places. She thought of him as a man who might some day make some

woman very happy as his wife. To be the wife of such a man was, in Dorothy's estimation, one of those blessed chances which come to some women, but which she never regarded as being within her own reach. Though she had thought much about him, she had never thought of him as a possible possession for herself; and now that he was offering himself to her, she was not at once made happy by his love. Her ideas of herself and of her life were all dislocated for the moment, and she required to be alone, that she might set herself in order, and try herself all over, and find whether her bones were broken. "Say that you believe me," he repeated.

"I don't know what to say," she whispered.

"I'll tell you what to say. Say at once that you will be my wife."

"I can't say that, Mr. Burgess."

"Why not? Do you mean that you cannot love me?"

"I think, if you please, I'll go up to Aunt Stanbury. It is time for me; indeed it is; and she will be wondering, and Martha will be put out. Indeed I must go up."

"And will you not answer me?"

"I don't know what to say. You must give me a little time to consider. I don't quite think you're serious."

"Heaven and earth!" began Brooke.

"And I'm sure it would never do. At any rate, I must go now. I must, indeed."

And so she escaped, and went up to her aunt's room, which she reached at ten minutes after her usual time, and before Martha had begun to be put out. She was

very civil to Martha, as though Martha had been injured; and she put her hand on her aunt's arm, with a soft, caressing, apologetic touch, feeling conscious that she had given cause for offence. "What has he been saying to you?" said her aunt, as soon as Martha had closed the door. This was a question which Dorothy, certainly, could not answer. Miss Stanbury meant nothing by it,—nothing beyond a sick woman's desire that something of the conversation of those who were not sick should be retailed to her; but to Dorothy the question meant so much! How should her aunt have known that he had said anything? She sat herself down and waited, giving no answer to the question. "I hope he gets his meals comfortably," said Miss Stanbury.

"I am sure he does," said Dorothy, infinitely relieved. Then, knowing how important it was that her aunt should sleep, she took up the volume of Jeremy Taylor, and, with so great a burden on her mind, she went on painfully and distinctly with the second sermon on the Marriage Ring. She strove valiantly to keep her mind to the godliness of the discourse, so that it might be of some possible service to herself; and to keep her voice to the tone that might be of service to her aunt. Presently she heard the grateful sound which indicated her aunt's repose, but she knew of experience that were she to stop, the sound and the sleep would come to an end also. For a whole hour she persevered, reading the sermon of the Marriage Ring with such attention to the godly principles of the teaching as she could give,—with that terrible burden upon her mind.

"Thank you;—thank you; that will do, my dear. Shut it up," said the sick woman. "It's time now for

the draught." Then Dorothy moved quietly about the room, and did her nurse's work with soft hand, and soft touch, and soft tread. After that her aunt kissed her, and bade her sit down and sleep.

"I'll go on reading, aunt, if you'll let me," said Dorothy. But Miss Stanbury, who was not a cruel woman, would have no more of the reading, and Dorothy's mind was left at liberty to think of the proposition that had been made to her. To one resolution she came very quickly. The period of her aunt's illness could not be a proper time for marriage vows, or the amenities of love-making. She did not feel that he, being a man, had offended; but she was quite sure that were she, a woman, the niece of so kind an aunt, the nurse at the bed-side of such an invalid,—were she at such a time to consent to talk of love, she would never deserve to have a lover. And from this resolve she got great comfort. It would give her an excuse for making no more assured answer at present, and would enable her to reflect at leisure as to the reply she would give him, should he ever, by any chance, renew his offer. If he did not,—and probably he would not,—then it would have been very well that he should not have been made the victim of a momentary generosity. She had complained of the dulness of her life, and that complaint from her had produced his noble, kind, generous, dear, enthusiastic benevolence towards her. As she thought of it all,—and by degrees he took great pleasure in thinking of it,—her mind bestowed upon him all manner of eulogies. She could not persuade herself that he really loved her, and yet he was full at heart of gratitude to him for the expression of his love. And as for herself, could she

love him? We who are looking on of course know that she loved him;—that from this moment there was nothing belonging to him, down to his shoe-tie, that would not be dear to her heart and an emblem so tender as to force a tear from her. He had already become her god, though she did not know it. She made comparisons between him and Mr. Gibson, and tried to convince herself that the judgment, which was always pronounced very clearly in Brooke's favour, came from anything but her heart. And thus through the long watches of the night she became very happy, feeling but not knowing that the whole aspect of the world was changed to her by those few words which her lover had spoken to her. She thought now that it would be consolation enough to her in future to know that such a man as Brooke Burgess had once asked her to be the partner of his life, and that it would be almost ungenerous in her to push her advantage further and attempt to take him at his word. Besides, there would be obstacles. Her aunt would dislike such a marriage for him, and he would be bound to obey her aunt in such a matter. She would not allow herself to think that she could ever become Brooke's wife, but nothing could rob her of the treasure of the offer which he had made her. Then Martha came to her at five o'clock, and she went to her bed to dream for an hour or two of Brooke Burgess and her future life.

On the next morning she met him at breakfast. She went down stairs later than usual, not till ten, having hung about her aunt's room, thinking that thus she would escape him for the present. She would wait till he was gone out, and then she would go down.

She did wait; but she could not hear the front door, and then her aunt murmured something about Brooke's breakfast. She was told to go down, and she went. But when on the stairs she slunk back to her own room, and stood there for awhile, aimless, motionless, not knowing what to do. Then one of the girls came to her, and told her that Mr. Burgess was waiting breakfast for her. She knew not what excuse to make, and at last descended slowly to the parlour. She was very happy, but had it been possible for her to have run away she would have gone.

"Dear Dorothy," he said at once. "I may call you so,—may I not?"

"Oh yes."

"And you will love me;—and be my own, own wife?"

"No, Mr. Burgess."

"No?"

"I mean;—that is to say——"

"Do you love me, Dorothy?"

"Only think how ill Aunt Stanbury is, Mr. Burgess;—perhaps dying! How can I have any thought now except about her? It wouldn't be right;—would it?"

"You may say that you love me."

"Mr. Burgess, pray, pray don't speak of it now. If you do I must go away."

"But do you love me?"

"Pray, pray don't, Mr. Burgess!"

There was nothing more to be got from her during the whole day than that. He told her in the evening that as soon as Miss Stanbury was well, he would come again;—that in any case he would come again. She sat quite still as he said this, with a solemn face,

—but smiling at heart, laughing at heart, so happy! When she got up to leave him, and was forced to give him her hand, he seized her in his arms and kissed her. "That is very, very wrong," she said, sobbing, and then ran to her room,—the happiest girl in all Exeter. He was to start early on the following morning, and she knew that she would not be forced to see him again. Thinking of him was so much pleasanter than seeing him!

CHAPTER XX.

Mr. Outhouse complains that it's Hard.

Life had gone on during the winter at St. Diddulph's Parsonage in a dull, weary, painful manner. There had come a letter in November from Trevelyan to his wife, saying that as he could trust neither her nor her uncle with the custody of his child, he should send a person armed with due legal authority, addressed to Mr. Outhouse, for the recovery of the boy, and desiring that little Louis might be at once surrendered to the messenger. Then of course there had arisen great trouble in the house. Both Mrs. Trevelyan and Nora Rowley had learned by this time that, as regarded the master of the house, they were not welcome guests at St. Diddulph's. When the threat was shewn to Mr. Outhouse, he did not say a word to indicate that the child should be given up. He muttered something, indeed, about impotent nonsense, which seemed to imply that the threat could be of no avail; but there was none of that reassurance to be obtained from him which a positive promise on his part to hold

the bairn against all comers would have given. Mrs. Outhouse told her niece more than once that the child would be given to no messenger whatever; but even she did not give the assurance with that energy which the mother would have liked. "They shall drag him away from me by force if they do take him!" said the mother, gnashing her teeth. Oh, if her father would but come! For some weeks she did not let the boy out of her sight; but when no messenger had presented himself by Christmas time, they all began to believe that the threat had in truth meant nothing,—that it had been part of the ravings of a madman.

But the threat had meant something. Early on one morning in January Mr. Outhouse was told that a person in the hall wanted to see him, and Mrs. Trevelyan, who was sitting at breakfast, the child being at the moment up-stairs, started from her seat. The maid described the man as being "All as one as a gentleman," though she would not go so far as to say that he was a gentleman in fact. Mr. Outhouse slowly rose from his breakfast, went out to the man in the passage, and bade him follow into the little closet that was now used as a study. It is needless perhaps to say that the man was Bozzle.

"I dare say, Mr. Houthouse, you don't know me," said Bozzle. Mr. Outhouse, disdaining all complimentary language, said that he certainly did not. "My name, Mr. Houthouse, is Samuel Bozzle, and I live at No. 55, Stony Walk, Union Street, Borough. I was in the Force once, but I work on my own 'ook now."

"What do you want with me, Mr. Bozzle?"

"It isn't so much with you, sir, as it is with a lady

as is under your protection; and it isn't so much with the lady as it is with her infant."

"Then you may go away, Mr. Bozzle," said Mr. Outhouse, impatiently. "You may as well go away at once."

"Will you please read them few lines, sir," said Mr. Bozzle. "They is in Mr. Trewilyan's handwriting, which will no doubt be familiar characters,—leastways to Mrs. T., if you don't know the gent's fist." Mr. Outhouse, after looking at the paper for a minute, and considering deeply what in this emergency he had better do, did take the paper and read it. The words ran as follows: "I hereby give full authority to Mr. Samuel Bozzle, of 55, Stony Walk, Union Street, Borough, to claim and to enforce possession of the body of my child, Louis Trevelyan; and I require that any person whatsoever who may now have the custody of the said child, whether it be my wife or any of her friends, shall at once deliver him up to Mr. Bozzle on the production of this authority.—LOUIS TREVELYAN." It may be explained that before this document had been written there had been much correspondence on the subject between Bozzle and his employer. To give the ex-policeman his due, he had not at first wished to meddle in the matter of the child. He had a wife at home who expressed an opinion with much vigour that the boy should be left with its mother, and that he, Bozzle, should he succeed in getting hold of the child, would not know what to do with it. Bozzle was aware, moreover, that it was his business to find out facts, and not to perform actions. But his employer had become very urgent with him. Mr. Bideawhile had positively refused to move in the matter; and Trevelyan,

mad as he was, had felt a disinclination to throw his affairs into the hands of a certain Mr. Skint, of Stamford Street, whom Bozzle had recommended to him as a lawyer. Trevelyan had hinted, moreover, that if Bozzle would make the application in person, that application, if not obeyed, would act with usefulness as a preliminary step for further personal measures to be taken by himself. He intended to return to England for the purpose, but he desired that the order for the child's rendition should be made at once. Therefore Bozzle had come. He was an earnest man, and had now worked himself up to a certain degree of energy in the matter. He was a man loving power, and specially anxious to enforce obedience from those with whom he came in contact by the production of the law's mysterious authority. In his heart he was ever tapping people on the shoulder, and telling them that they were wanted. Thus, when he displayed his document to Mr. Outhouse, he had taught himself at least to desire that that document should be obeyed.

Mr. Outhouse read the paper and turned up his nose at it. "You had better go away," said he, as he thrust it back into Bozzle's hand.

"Of course I shall go away when I have the child."

"Psha!" said Mr. Outhouse.

"What does that mean, Mr. Houthouse? I presume you'll not dispute the paternal parent's legal authority?"

"Go away, sir," said Mr. Outhouse.

"Go away!"

"Yes;—out of this house. It's my belief that you're a knave."

"A knave, Mr. Houthouse?"

"Yes;—a knave. No one who was not a knave would lend a hand towards separating a little child from its mother. I think you are a knave, but I don't think you are fool enough to suppose that the child will be given up to you."

"It's my belief that knave is hactionable," said Bozzle,—whose respect, however, for the clergyman was rising fast. "Would you mind ringing the bell, Mr. Houthouse, and calling me a knave again before the young woman?"

"Go away," said Mr. Outhouse.

"If you have no objection, sir, I should be glad to see the lady before I goes."

"You won't see any lady here; and if you don't get out of my house when I tell you, I'll send for a real policeman." Then was Bozzle conquered; and, as he went, he admitted to himself that he had sinned against all the rules of his life in attempting to go beyond the legitimate line of his profession. As long as he confined himself to the getting up of facts nobody could threaten him with a "real policeman." But one fact he had learned to-day. The clergyman of St. Diddulph's, who had been represented to him as a weak, foolish man, was anything but that. Bozzle was much impressed in favour of Mr. Outhouse, and would have been glad to have done that gentleman a kindness had an opportunity come in his way.

"What does he want, Uncle Oliphant?" said Mrs. Trevelyan at the foot of the stairs, guarding the way up to the nursery. At this moment the front door had just been closed behind the back of Mr. Bozzle.

"You had better ask no questions," said Mr. Outhouse.

"But is it about Louis?"

"Yes, he came about him."

"Well? Of course you must tell me, Uncle Oliphant. Think of my condition."

"He had some stupid paper in his hand from your husband, but it meant nothing."

"He was the messenger, then?"

"Yes, he was the messenger. But I don't suppose he expected to get anything. Never mind. Go up and look after the child." Then Mrs. Trevelyan returned to her boy, and Mr. Outhouse went back to his papers.

It was very hard upon him, Mr. Outhouse thought, —very hard. He was threatened with an action now, and most probably would become subject to one. Though he had been spirited enough in presence of the enemy, he was very much out of spirits at this moment. Though he had admitted to himself that his duty required him to protect his wife's niece, he had never taken the poor woman to his heart with a loving, generous feeling of true guardianship. Though he would not give up the child to Bozzle, he thoroughly wished that the child was out of his house. Though he called Bozzle a knave and Trevelyan a madman, still he considered that Colonel Osborne was the chief sinner, and that Emily Trevelyan had behaved badly. He constantly repeated to himself the old adage, that there was no smoke without fire; and lamented the misfortune that had brought him into close relation with things and people that were so little to his taste. He sat for awhile, with a pen in his hand, at the miserable

little substitute for a library table which had been provided for him, and strove to collect his thoughts and go on with his work. But the effort was in vain. Bozzle would be there, presenting his document, and begging that the maid might be rung for, in order that she might hear him called a knave. And then he knew that on this very day his niece intended to hand him money, which he could not refuse. Of what use would it be to refuse it now, after it had been once taken? As he could not write a word, he rose and went away to his wife.

"If this goes on much longer," said he, "I shall be in Bedlam."

"My dear, don't speak of it in that way!"

"That's all very well. I suppose I ought to say that I like it. There has been a policeman here who is going to bring an action against me."

"A policeman!"

"Some one that her husband has sent for the child."

"The boy must not be given up, Oliphant."

"It's all very well to say that, but I suppose we must obey the law. The Parsonage of St. Diddulph's isn't a castle in the Apennines. When it comes to this, that a policeman is sent here to fetch any man's child, and threatens me with an action because I tell him to leave my house, it is very hard upon me, seeing how very little I've had to do with it. It's all over the parish now that my niece is kept here away from her husband, and that a lover comes to see her. This about the policeman will be known now, of course. I only say it is hard; that's all." The wife did all that she could to comfort him, reminding him that Sir Mar-

maduke would be home soon, and that then the burden would be taken from his shoulders. But she was forced to admit that it was very hard.

CHAPTER XXI.

Hugh Stanbury is shewn to be no Conjuror.

MANY weeks had now passed since Hugh Stanbury had paid his visit to St. Diddulph's, and Nora Rowley was beginning to believe that her rejection of her lover had been so firm and decided that she would never see him or hear from him more;—and she had long since confessed to herself that if she did not see him or hear from him soon, life would not be worth a straw to her. To all of us a single treasure counts for much more when the outward circumstances of our life are dull, unvaried, and melancholy, than it does when our days are full of pleasure, or excitement, or even of business. With Nora Rowley at St. Diddulph's life at present was very melancholy. There was little or no society to enliven her. Her sister was sick at heart, and becoming ill in health under the burden of her troubles. Mr. Outhouse was moody and wretched; and Mrs. Outhouse, though she did her best to make her house comfortable to her unwelcome inmates, could not make it appear that their presence there was a pleasure to her. Nora understood better than did her sister how distasteful the present arrangement was to ıeir uncle, and was consequently very uncomfortable ı that score. And in the midst of that unhappiness, ıe of course told herself that she was a young woman ıserable and unfortunate altogether. It is always so

with us. The heart when it is burdened, though it may have ample strength to bear the burden, loses its buoyancy and doubts its own power. It is like the springs of a carriage which are pressed flat by the superincumbent weight. But because the springs are good, the weight is carried safely, and they are the better afterwards for their required purposes because of the trial to which they have been subjected.

Nora had sent her lover away, and now at the end of three months from the day of his dismissal she had taught herself to believe that he would never come again. Amidst the sadness of her life at St. Diddulph's some confidence in a lover expected to come again would have done much to cheer her. The more she thought of Hugh Stanbury, the more fully she became convinced that he was the man who as a lover, as a husband, and as a companion, would just suit all her tastes. She endowed him liberally with a hundred good gifts in the disposal of which Nature had been much more sparing. She made for herself a mental portrait of him more gracious in its flattery than ever was canvas coming from the hand of a Court limner. She gave him all gifts of manliness, honesty, truth, and energy, and felt regarding him that he was a Paladin,—such as Paladins are in this age, that he was indomitable, sure of success, and fitted in all respects to take the high position which he would certainly win for himself. But she did not presume him to be endowed with such a constancy as would make him come to seek her hand again. Had Nora at thi time of her life been living at the West-end of Londor and going out to parties three or four times a weel she would have been quite easy about his coming. Th

springs would not have been weighted so heavily, and her heart would have been elastic.

No doubt she had forgotten many of the circumstances of his visit and of his departure. Immediately on his going she had told her sister that he would certainly come again, but had said at the same time that his coming could be of no use. He was so poor a man; and she,—though poorer than he,—had been so little accustomed to poverty of life, that she had then acknowledged to herself that she was not fit to be his wife. Gradually, as the slow weeks went by her, there had come a change in her ideas. She now thought that he never would come again; but that if he did she would confess to him that her own views about life were changed. "I would tell him frankly that I could eat a crust with him in any garret in London." But this was said to herself;—never to her sister. Emily and Mrs. Outhouse had determined together that it would be wise to abstain from all mention of Hugh Stanbury's name. Nora had felt that her sister had so abstained, and this reticence had assisted in producing the despair which had come upon her. Hugh, when he had left her, had certainly given her encouragement to expect that he would return. She had been sure then that he would return. She had been sure of it, though she had told him that it would be useless. But now, when these sad weeks had slowly crept over her head, when during the long hours of the long days she had thought of him continually,—telling herself that it was impossible that she should ever become the wife of any man if she did not become his,—she assured herself that she had seen and heard the last of him.

She must surely have forgotten his hot words and that daring embrace.

Then there came a letter to her. The question of the management of letters for young ladies is handled very differently in different houses. In some establishments the post is as free to young ladies as it is to the reverend seniors of the household. In others it is considered to be quite a matter of course that some experienced discretion should sit in judgment on the correspondence of the daughters of the family. When Nora Rowley was living with her sister in Curzon Street, she would have been very indignant indeed had it been suggested to her that there was any authority over her letters vested in her sister. But now, circumstanced as she was at St. Diddulph's, she did understand that no letter would reach her without her aunt knowing that it had come. All this was distasteful to her,—as were indeed all the details of her life at St. Diddulph's;—but she could not help herself. Had her aunt told her that she should never be allowed to receive a letter at all, she must have submitted till her mother had come to her relief. The letter which reached her now was put into her hands by her sister, but it had been given to Mrs. Trevelyan by Mrs. Outhouse. "Nora," said Mrs. Trevelyan, "here is a letter for you. I think it is from Mr. Stanbury."

"Give it me," said Nora greedily.

"Of course I will give it you. But I hope you do not intend to correspond with him."

"If he has written to me I shall answer him of course," said Nora, holding her treasure.

"Aunt Mary thinks that you should not do so till papa and mamma have arrived."

"If Aunt Mary is afraid of me let her tell me so, and I will contrive to go somewhere else." Poor Nora knew that this threat was futile. There was no house to which she could take herself.

"She is not afraid of you at all, Nora. She only says that she thinks you should not write to Mr. Stanbury." Then Nora escaped to the cold but solitary seclusion of her bed-room and there she read her letter.

The reader may remember that Hugh Stanbury when he last left St. Diddulph's had not been oppressed by any of the gloomy reveries of a despairing lover. He had spoken his mind freely to Nora, and had felt himself justified in believing that he had not spoken in vain. He had had her in his arms, and she had found it impossible to say that she did not love him. But then she had been quite firm in her purpose to give him no encouragement that she could avoid. She had said no word that would justify him in considering that there was any engagement between them; and, moreover, he had been warned not to come to the house by its mistress. From day to day he thought of it all, now telling himself that there was nothing to be done but to trust in her fidelity till he should be in a position to offer her a fitting home, and then reflecting that he could not expect such a girl as Nora Rowley to wait for him, unless he could succeed in making her understand that he at any rate intended to wait for her. On one day he would think that good faith and proper consideration for Nora herself required him to keep silent; on the next he would tell himself that such maudlin chivalry as he was proposing to himself was sure to go to the wall and be neither

rewarded nor recognised. So at last he sat down and wrote the following letter:—

"Lincoln's Inn Fields, January, 186—.

"DEAREST NORA,

"Ever since I last saw you at St. Diddulph's, I have been trying to teach myself what I ought to do in reference to you. Sometimes I think that because I am poor I ought to hold my tongue. At others I feel sure that I ought to speak out loud, because I love you so dearly. You may presume that just at this moment the latter opinion is in the ascendant.

"As I do write I mean to be very bold;—so bold that if I am wrong you will be thoroughly disgusted with me and will never willingly see me again. But I think it best to be true, and to say what I think. I do believe that you love me. According to all precedent I ought not to say so;—but I do believe it. Ever since I was at St. Diddulph's that belief has made me happy,—though there have been moments of doubt. If I thought that you did not love me, I would trouble you no further. A man may win his way to love when social circumstances are such as to throw him and the girl together; but such is not the case with us; and unless you love me now, you never will love me." "I do—I do!" said Nora, pressing the letter to her bosom. "If you do, I think that you owe it me to say so, and to let me have all the joy and all the feeling of responsibility which such an assurance will give me." "I will tell him so," said Nora; "I don't care what may come afterwards, but I will tell him the truth." "I know," continued Hugh, "that an engagement with me now would be hazardous, because what I earn is

both scanty and precarious; but it seems to me that nothing could ever be done without some risk. There are risks of different kinds,——" She wondered whether he was thinking when he wrote this of the rock on which her sister's barque had been split to pieces;—"and we may hardly hope to avoid them all. For myself, I own that life would be tame to me, if there were no dangers to be overcome.

"If you do love me, and will say so, I will not ask you to be my wife till I can give you a proper home; but the knowledge that I am the master of the treasure which I desire will give me a double energy, and will make me feel that when I have gained so much I cannot fail of adding to it all other smaller things that may be necessary.

"Pray,—pray send me an answer. I cannot reach you except by writing, as I was told by your aunt not to come to the house again.

"Dearest Nora, pray believe
"That I shall always be truly yours only,
"HUGH STANBURY."

Write to him! Of course she would write to him. Of course she would confess to him the truth. "He tells me that I owe it to him to say so, and I acknowledge the debt," she said aloud to herself. "And as for a proper home, he shall be the judge of that." She resolved that she would not be a fine lady, not fastidious, not coy, not afraid to take her full share of the risk of which he spoke in such manly terms. "It is quite true. As he has been able to make me love him, I have no right to stand aloof,—even if I wished

it." As she was walking up and down the room so resolving her sister came to her.

"Well, dear!" said Emily. "May I ask what it is he says?"

Nora paused a moment, holding the letter tight in her hand, and then she held it out to her sister. "There it is. You may read it." Mrs. Trevelyan took the letter and read it slowly, during which Nora stood looking out of the window. She would not watch her sister's face, as she did not wish to have to reply to any outward signs of disapproval. "Give it me back," she said, when she heard by the refolding of the paper that the perusal was finished.

"Of course I shall give it you back, dear."

"Yes;—thanks. I did not mean to doubt you."

"And what will you do, Nora?"

"Answer it of course."

"I would think a little before I answered it," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"I have thought,—a great deal, already."

"And how will you answer it?"

Nora paused again before she replied. "As nearly as I know how to do in such words as he would put into my mouth. I shall strive to write just what I think he would wish me to write."

"Then you will engage yourself to him, Nora?"

"Certainly I shall. I am engaged to him already. I have been ever since he came here."

"You told me that there was nothing of the kind."

"I told you that I loved him better than anybody in the world, and that ought to have made you know what it must come to. When I am thinking of him every day, and every hour, how can I not be glad to

have an engagement settled with him? I couldn't marry anybody else, and I don't want to remain as I am." The tears came into the married sister's eyes, and rolled down her cheeks, as this was said to her. Would it not have been better for her had she remained as she was? "Dear Emily," said Nora, "you have got Louey still."

"Yes;—and they mean to take him from me. But I do not wish to speak of myself. Will you postpone your answer till mamma is here?"

"I cannot do that, Emily. What; receive such a letter as that, and send no reply to it!"

"I would write a line for you, and explain——"

"No, indeed, Emily. I choose to answer my own letters. I have shewn you that, because I trust you; but I have fully made up my mind as to what I shall write. It will have been written and sent before dinner."

"I think you will be wrong, Nora."

"Why wrong! When I came over here to stay with you, would mamma ever have thought of directing me not to accept any offer till her consent had been obtained all the way from the Mandarins? She would never have dreamed of such a thing."

"Will you ask Aunt Mary?"

"Certainly not. What is Aunt Mary to me? We are here in her house for a time, under the press of circumstances; but I owe her no obedience. She told Mr. Stanbury not to come here; and he has not come; and I shall not ask him to come. I would not willingly bring any one into Uncle Oliphant's house, that he and she do not wish to see. But I will not admit that either of them have any authority over me."

"Then who has, dearest?"

"Nobody;—except papa and mamma; and they have chosen to leave me to myself."

Mrs. Trevelyan found it impossible to shake her sister's firmness, and could herself do nothing, except tell Mrs. Outhouse what was the state of affairs. When she said that she should do this, there almost came to be a flow of high words between the two sisters; but at last Nora assented. "As for knowing, I don't care if all the world knows it. I shall do nothing in a corner. I don't suppose Aunt Mary will endeavour to prevent my posting my letter."

Emily at last went to seek Mrs. Outhouse, and Nora at once sat down to her desk. Neither of the sisters felt at all sure that Mrs. Outhouse would not attempt to stop the emission of the letter from her house; but, as it happened, she was out, and did not return till Nora had come back from her journey to the neighbouring post-office. She would trust her letter, when written, to no hands but her own; and as she herself dropped it into the safe custody of the Postmaster-General, it also shall be revealed to the public:—

"Parsonage, St. Diddulph's, January, 186—.

"Dear Hugh,

"For I suppose I may as well write to you in that way now. I have been made so happy by your affectionate letter. Is not that a candid confession for a young lady? But you tell me that I owe you the truth, and so I tell you the truth. Nobody will ever be anything to me, except you; and you are everything. I do love you; and should it ever be possible, I will become your wife.

"I have said so much, because I feel that I ought to obey the order you have given me; but pray do not try to see me or write to me till mamma has arrived. She and papa will be here in the spring,—quite early in the spring, we hope; and then you may come to us. What they may say, of course, I cannot tell; but I shall be true to you.

"Your own, with truest affection,

"NORA.

"Of course, you knew that I loved you, and I don't think that you are a conjuror at all."

As soon as ever the letter was written, she put on her bonnet, and went forth with it herself to the post-office. Mrs. Trevelyan stopped her on the stairs, and endeavoured to detain her, but Nora would not be detained. "I must judge for myself about this," she said. "If mamma were here, it would be different, but, as she is not here, I must judge for myself."

What Mrs. Outhouse might have done had she been at home at the time, it would be useless to surmise. She was told what had happened when it occurred, and questioned Nora on the subject. "I thought I understood from you," she said, with something of severity in her countenance, "that there was to be nothing between you and Mr. Stanbury—at any rate, till my brother came home?"

"I never pledged myself to anything of the kind, Aunt Mary," Nora said. "I think he promised that he would not come here, and I don't suppose that he means to come. If he should do so, I shall not see him."

With this Mrs. Outhouse was obliged to be content.

The letter was gone, and could not be stopped. Nor, indeed, had any authority been delegated to her by which she would have been justified in stopping it. She could only join her husband in wishing that they both might be relieved, as soon as possible, from the terrible burden which had been thrown upon them. "I call it very hard," said Mr. Outhouse;—"very hard, indeed. If we were to desire them to leave the house, everybody would cry out upon us for our cruelty; and yet, while they remain here, they will submit themselves to no authority. As far as I can see, they may, both of them, do just what they please, and we can't stop it."

CHAPTER XXII.

Mr. Gibson's Threat.

Miss Stanbury for a long time persisted in being neither better nor worse. Sir Peter would not declare her state to be precarious, nor would he say that she was out of danger; and Mr. Martin had been so utterly prostrated by the nearly-fatal effects of his own mistake that he was quite unable to rally himself and talk on the subject with any spirit or confidence. When interrogated he would simply reply that Sir Peter said this and Sir Peter said that, and thus add to, rather than diminish, the doubt, and excitement, and varied opinion which prevailed through the city. On one morning it was absolutely asserted within the limits of the Close that Miss Stanbury was dying,—and it was believed for half a day at the bank that she was then lying in articulo mortis. There had got about, too, a report that a portion of the property had only been left to

Miss Stanbury for her life, that the Burgesses would be able to reclaim the houses in the city, and that a will had been made altogether in favour of Dorothy, cutting out even Brooke from any share in the inheritance;—and thus Exeter had a good deal to say respecting the affairs and state of health of our old friend. Miss Stanbury's illness, however, was true enough. She was much too ill to hear anything of what was going on;—too ill to allow Martha to talk to her at all about the outside public. When the invalid herself would ask questions about the affairs of the world, Martha would be very discreet and turn away from the subject. Miss Stanbury, for instance, ill as she was, exhibited a most mundane interest, not exactly in Camilla French's marriage, but in the delay which that marriage seemed destined to encounter. "I dare say he'll slip out of it yet," said the sick lady to her confidential servant. Then Martha had thought it right to change the subject, feeling it to be wrong that an old lady on her death-bed should be taking joy in the disappointment of her young neighbour. Martha changed the subject, first to jelly, and then to the psalms of the day. Miss Stanbury was too weak to resist; but the last verse of the last psalm of the evening had hardly been finished before she remarked that she would never believe it till she saw it. "It's all in the hands of Him as is on high, mum," said Martha, turning her eyes up to the ceiling, and closing the book at the same time, with a look strongly indicative of displeasure.

Miss Stanbury understood it all as well as though she were in perfect health. She knew her own failings, was conscious of her worldly tendencies, and perceived

that her old servant was thinking of it. And then sundry odd thoughts, half-digested thoughts, ideas too difficult for her present strength, crossed her brain. Had it been wicked of her when she was well to hope that a scheming woman should not succeed in betraying a man by her schemes into an ill-assorted marriage; and if not wicked then, was it wicked now because she was ill? And from that thought her mind travelled on to the ordinary practices of death-bed piety. Could an assumed devotion be of use to her now,—such a devotion as Martha was enjoining upon her from hour to hour, in pure and affectionate solicitude for her soul? She had spoken one evening of a game of cards, saying that a game of cribbage would have consoled her. Then Martha, with a shudder, had suggested a hymn, and had had recourse at once to a sleeping draught. Miss Stanbury had submitted, but had understood it all. If cards were wicked, she had indeed been a terrible sinner. What hope could there be now, on her death-bed, for one so sinful? And she could not repent of her cards, and would not try to repent of them, not seeing the evil of them; and if they were innocent, why should she not have the consolation now,—when she so much wanted it? Yet she knew that the whole household, even Dorothy, would be in arms against her, were she to suggest such a thing. She took the hymn and the sleeping draught, telling herself that it would be best for her to banish such ideas from her mind. Pastors and masters had laid down for her a mode of living, which she had followed, but indifferently perhaps, but still with an intention of obedience. They had also laid down a mode of dying, and it would be well that she should follow that as closely as possible.

She would say nothing more about cards. She would think nothing more of Camilla French. But, as she so resolved, with intellect half asleep, with her mind wandering between fact and dream, she was unconsciously comfortable with an assurance that if Mr. Gibson did marry Camilla French, Camilla French would lead him the very devil of a life.

During three days Dorothy went about the house as quiet as a mouse, sitting nightly at her aunt's bedside, and tending the sick woman with the closest care. She, too, had been now and again somewhat startled by the seeming worldliness of her aunt in her illness. Her aunt talked to her about rents, and gave her messages for Brooke Burgess on subjects which seemed to Dorothy to be profane when spoken of on what might perhaps be a death-bed. And this struck her the more strongly, because she had a matter of her own on which she would have much wished to ascertain her aunt's opinion, if she had not thought that it would have been exceedingly wrong of her to trouble her aunt's mind at such a time by any such matter. Hitherto she had said not a word of Brooke's proposal to any living being. At present it was a secret with herself, but a secret so big that it almost caused her bosom to burst with the load that it bore. She could not, she thought, write to Priscilla till she had told her aunt. If she were to write a word on the subject to any one, she could not fail to make manifest the extreme longing of her own heart. She could not have written Brooke's name on paper, in reference to his words to herself, without covering it with epithets of love. But all that must be known to no one if her love was to be of no avail to her. And she had an idea that her aunt would

not wish Brooke to marry her,—would think that Brooke should do better; and she was quite clear that in such a matter as this her aunt's wishes must be law. Had not her aunt the power of disinheriting Brooke altogether? And what then if her aunt should die,—should die now,—leaving Brooke at liberty to do as he pleased? There was something so distasteful to her in this view of the matter that she would not look at it. She would not allow herself to think of any success which might possibly accrue to herself by reason of her aunt's death. Intense as was the longing in her heart for permission from those in authority over her to give herself to Brooke Burgess, perfect as was the earthly Paradise which appeared to be open to her when she thought of the good thing which had befallen her in that matter, she conceived that she would be guilty of the grossest ingratitude were she in any degree to curtail even her own estimate of her aunt's prohibitory powers because of her aunt's illness. The remembrance of the words which Brooke had spoken to her was with her quite perfect. She was entirely conscious of the joy which would be hers, if she might accept those words as properly sanctioned; but she was a creature in her aunt's hands,—according to her own ideas of her own duties; and while her aunt was ill she could not even learn what might be the behests which she would be called on to obey.

She was sitting one evening alone, thinking of all this, having left Martha with her aunt, and was trying to reconcile the circumstances of her life as it now existed with the circumstances as they had been with her in the old days at Nuncombe Putney, wondering at herself in that she should have a lover, and trying

to convince herself that for her this little episode of romance could mean nothing serious, when Martha crept down into the room to her. Of late days,—the alteration might perhaps be dated from the rejection of Mr. Gibson,—Martha, who had always been very kind, had become more respectful in her manner to Dorothy than had heretofore been usual with her. Dorothy was quite aware of it, and was not unconscious of a certain rise in the world which was thereby indicated. "If you please, miss," said Martha, "who do you think is here?"

"But there is nobody with my aunt?" said Dorothy.

"She is sleeping like a babby, and I came down just for a moment. Mr, Gibson is here, miss,—in the house! He asked for your aunt, and when, of course, he could not see her, he asked for you." Dorothy for a few minutes was utterly disconcerted, but at last she consented to see Mr. Gibson. "I think it is best," said Martha, "because it is bad to be fighting, and missus so ill. 'Blessed are the peace-makers,' miss, 'for they shall be called the children of God.'" Convinced by this argument, or by the working of her own mind, Dorothy directed that Mr. Gibson might be shewn into the room. When he came, she found herself unable to address him. She remembered the last time in which she had seen him, and was lost in wonder that he should be there. But she shook hands with him, and went through some form of greeting in which no word was uttered.

"I hope you will not think that I have done wrong," said he, "in calling to ask after my old friend's state of health?"

"Oh dear, no," said Dorothy, quite bewildered

"I have known her for so very long, Miss Dorothy, that now in the hour of her distress, and perhaps mortal malady, I cannot stop to remember the few harsh words that she spoke to me lately."

"She never means to be harsh, Mr. Gibson."

"Ah; well; no,—perhaps not. At any rate I have learned to forgive and forget.. I am afraid your aunt is very ill, Miss Dorothy."

"She is ill, certainly, Mr. Gibson."

"Dear, dear! We are all as the grass of the field, Miss Dorothy,—here to-day and gone to-morrow, as sparks fly upwards. Just fit to be cut down and cast into the oven. Mr. Jennings has been with her, I believe?" Mr. Jennings was the other minor canon.

"He comes three times a week, Mr. Gibson."

"He is an excellent young man,—a very good young man. It has been a great comfort to me to have Jennings with me. But he's very young, Miss Dorothy; isn't he?" Dorothy muttered something, purporting to declare that she was not acquainted with the exact circumstances of Mr. Jennings' age. "I should be so glad to come if my old friend would allow me," said Mr. Gibson, almost with a sigh. Dorothy was clearly of opinion that any change at the present would be bad for her aunt, but she did not know how to express her opinion; so she stood silent and looked at him. "There needn't be a word spoken, you know, about the ladies at Heavitree," said Mr. Gibson.

"Oh dear, no," said Dorothy. And yet she knew well that there would be such words spoken if Mr. Gibson were to make his way into her aunt's room. Her aunt was constantly alluding to the ladies at

Heavitree, in spite of all the efforts of her old servant to restrain her.

"There was some little misunderstanding," said Mr. Gibson; "but all that should be over now. We both intended for the best, Miss Dorothy; and I'm sure nobody here can say that I wasn't sincere." But Dorothy, though she could not bring herself to answer Mr. Gibson plainly, could not be induced to assent to his proposition. She muttered something about her aunt's weakness, and the great attention which Mr. Jennings shewed. Her aunt had become very fond of Mr. Jennings, and she did at last express her opinion, with some clearness, that her aunt should not be disturbed by any changes at present. "After that I should not think of pressing it, Miss Dorothy," said Mr. Gibson; "but, still, I do hope that I may have the privilege of seeing her yet once again in the flesh. And touching my approaching marriage, Miss Dorothy——" He paused, and Dorothy felt that she was blushing up to the roots of her hair. "Touching my marriage," continued Mr. Gibson, "which however will not be solemnized till the end of March;"—it was manifest that he regarded this as a point that would in that household be regarded as an argument in his favour,—"I do hope that you will look upon it in the most favourable light,—and your excellent aunt also, if she be spared to us."

"I am sure we hope that you will be happy, Mr. Gibson."

"What was I to do, Miss Dorothy? I know that have been very much blamed;—but so unfairly! I have never meant to be untrue to a mouse, Miss Dorothy." Dorothy did not at all understand whether she

were the mouse, or Camilla French, or Arabella. "And it is so hard to find that one is ill-spoken of because things have gone a little amiss." It was quite impossible that Dorothy should make any answer to this, and at last Mr. Gibson left her, assuring her with his last word that nothing would give him so much pleasure as to be called upon once more to see his old friend in her last moments.

Though Miss Stanbury had been described as sleeping "like a babby," she had heard the footsteps of a strange man in the house, and had made Martha tell her whose footsteps they were. As soon as Dorothy went to her, she darted upon the subject with all her old keenness. "What did he want here, Dolly?"

"He said he would like to see you, aunt,—when you are a little better, you know. He spoke a good deal of his old friendship and respect."

"He should have thought of that before. How am I to see people now?"

"But when you are better, aunt——?"

"How do I know that I shall ever be better? He isn't off with those people at Heavitree,—is he?"

"I hope not, aunt."

"Psha! A poor, weak, insufficient creature;—that's what he is. Mr. Jennings is worth twenty of him." Dorothy, though she put the question again in its most alluring form of Christian charity and forgiveness, could not induce her aunt to say that she would see Mr. Gibson. "How can I see him, when you know that Sir Peter has forbidden me to see anybody, except Mrs. Clifford and Mr. Jennings?"

Two days afterwards there was an uncomfortable little scene at Heavitree. It must, no doubt, have

been the case, that the same train of circumstances which had produced Mr. Gibson's visit to the Close, produced also the scene in question. It was suggested by some who were attending closely to the matter that Mr. Gibson had already come to repent his engagement with Camilla French; and, indeed, there were those who pretended to believe that he was induced, by the prospect of Miss Stanbury's demise, to transfer his allegiance yet again, and to bestow his hand upon Dorothy at last. There were many in the city who could never be persuaded that Dorothy had refused him,—these being, for the most past, ladies in whose estimation the value of a husband was counted so great, and a beneficed clergyman so valuable among suitors, that it was to their thinking impossible that Dorothy Stanbury should in her sound senses have rejected such an offer. "I don't believe a bit of it," said Mrs. Crumbie to Mrs. Apjohn; "is it likely?" The ears of all the French family were keenly alive to rumours, and to rumours of rumours. Reports of these opinions respecting Mr. Gibson reached Heavitree, and had their effect. As long as Mr. Gibson was behaving well as a suitor, they were inoperative there. What did it matter to them how the prize might have been struggled for,—might still be struggled for elsewhere, while they enjoyed the consciousness of possession? But when the consciousness of possession became marred by a cankerous doubt, such rumours were very important. Camilla heard of the visit in the Close, and swore that he would have justice done her. She gave her mother to understand that, if any trick were played upon her, the diocese should be made to ring of it, in a fashion that would astonish them all, from the bishop down-

wards. Whereupon Mrs. French, putting much faith in her daughter's threats, sent for Mr. Gibson.

"The truth is, Mr. Gibson," said Mrs. French, when the civilities of their first greeting had been completed, "my poor child is pining."

"Pining, Mrs. French!"

"Yes;—pining, Mr. Gibson. I am afraid that you little understand how sensitive is that young heart. Of course, she is your own now. To her thinking, it would be treason to you for her to indulge in conversation with any other gentleman; but, then, she expects that you should spend your evenings with her,—of course!"

"But, Mrs. French,—think of my engagements, as a clergyman."

"We know all about that, Mr. Gibson. We know what a clergyman's calls are. It isn't like a doctor's, Mr. Gibson."

"It's very often worse, Mrs. French."

"Why should you go calling in the Close, Mr. Gibson?" Here was the gist of the accusation.

"Wouldn't you have me make my peace with a poor dying sister?" pleaded Mr. Gibson.

"After what has occurred," said Mrs. French, shaking her head at him, "and while things are just as they are now, it would be more like an honest man of you to stay away. And, of course, Camilla feels it. She feels it very much;—and she won't put up with it neither."

"I think this is the cruellest, cruellest thing I ever heard," said Mr. Gibson.

"It is you that are cruel, sir."

Then the wretched man turned at bay. "I tell

you what it is, Mrs. French;—if I am treated in this way, I won't stand it. I won't, indeed. I'll go away. I'm not going to be suspected, nor yet blown up. I think I've behaved handsomely, at any rate to Camilla."

"Quite so, Mr. Gibson, if you would come and see her on evenings," said Mrs. French, who was falling back into her usual state of timidity.

"But, if I'm to be treated in this way, I will go away. I've thoughts of it as it is. I've been already invited to go to Natal, and if I hear anything more of these accusations, I shall certainly make up my mind to go." Then he left the house, before Camilla could be down upon him from her perch on the landing-place.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Republican Browning.

Mr. Glascock had returned to Naples after his sufferings in the dining-room of the American Minister, and by the middle of February was back again in Florence. His father was still alive, and it was said that the old lord would now probably live through the winter. And it was understood that Mr. Glascock would remain in Italy. He had declared that he would pass his time between Naples, Rome, and Florence; but it seemed to his friends that Florence was, of the three, the most to his taste. He liked his room, he said, at the York Hotel, and he liked being in the capital. That was his own statement. His friends said that he liked being with Carry Spalding, the daughter of the American Minister; but none of them,

then in Italy, were sufficiently intimate with him to express that opinion to himself.

It had been expressed more than once to Carry Spalding. The world in general says such things to ladies more openly than it does to men, and the probability of a girl's success in matrimony is canvassed in her hearing by those who are nearest to her with a freedom which can seldom be used in regard to a man. A man's most intimate friend hardly speaks to him of the prospect of his marriage till he himself has told that the engagement exists. The lips of no living person had suggested to Mr. Glascock that the American girl was to become his wife; but a great deal had been said to Carry Spalding about the conquest she had made. Her uncle, her aunt, her sister, and her great friend Miss Petrie, the poetess,—the Republican Browning as she was called,—had all spoken to her about it frequently. Olivia had declared her conviction that the thing was to be. Miss Petrie had, with considerable eloquence, explained to her friend that that English title, which was but the clatter of a sounding brass, should be regarded as a drawback rather than as an advantage. Mrs. Spalding, who was no poetess, would undoubtedly have welcomed Mr. Glascock as her niece's husband with all an aunt's energy. When told by Miss Petrie that old Lord Peterborough was a tinkling cymbal she snapped angrily at her gifted countrywoman. But she was too honest a woman, and too conscious also of her niece's strength, to say a word to urge her on. Mr. Spalding as an American minister, with full powers at the court of a European sovereign, felt that he had full as much to give as to receive; but he was well inclined to do both.

He would have been much pleased to talk about his nephew Lord Peterborough, and he loved his niece dearly. But by the middle of February he was beginning to think that the matter had been long enough in training. If the Honourable Glascock meant anything, why did he not speak out his mind plainly? The American Minister in such matters was accustomed to fewer ambages than were common in the circles among which Mr. Glascock had lived.

In the meantime Caroline Spalding was suffering. She had allowed herself to think that Mr. Glascock intended to propose to her, and had acknowledged to herself that were he to do so she would certainly accept him. All that she had seen of him, since the day on which he had been courteous to her about the seat in the diligence, had been pleasant to her. She had felt the charm of his manner, his education, and his gentleness; and had told herself that with all her love for her own country, she would willingly become an Englishwoman for the sake of being that man's wife. But nevertheless the warnings of her great friend, the poetess, had not been thrown away upon her. She would put away from herself as far as she could any desire to become Lady Peterborough. There should be no bias in the man's favour on that score. The tinkling cymbal and the sounding brass should be nothing to her. But yet,—yet what a chance was there here for her? "They are dishonest, and rotten at the core," said Miss Petrie, trying to make her friend understand that a free American should under no circumstances place trust in an English aristocrat. "Their country, Carry, is a game played out, while we are still breasting the hill with our young lungs full of

air." Carry Spalding was proud of her intimacy with the Republican Browning; but nevertheless she liked Mr. Glascock; and when Mr. Glascock had been ten days in Florence, on his third visit to the city, and had been four or five times at the embassy without expressing his intentions in the proper form, Carry Spalding began to think that she had better save herself from a heartbreak while salvation might be within her reach. She perceived that her uncle was gloomy and almost angry when he spoke of Mr. Glascock, and that her aunt was fretful with disappointment. The Republican Browning had uttered almost a note of triumph; and had it not been that Olivia persisted, Carry Spalding would have consented to go away with Miss Petrie to Rome. "The old stones are rotten too," said the poetess; "but their dust tells no lies." That well known piece of hers—"Ancient Marbles, while ye crumble," was written at this time, and contained an occult reference to Mr. Glascock and her friend.

But Livy Spalding clung to the alliance. She probably knew her sister's heart better than did the others; and perhaps also had a clearer insight into Mr. Glascock's character. She was at any rate clearly of opinion that there should be no running away. "Either you do like him, or you don't. If you do, what are you to get by going to Rome?" said Livy.

"I shall get quit of doubt and trouble."

"I call that cowardice. I would never run away from a man, Carry. Aunt Sophie forgets that they don't manage these things in England just as we do."

"I don't know why there should be a difference."

"Nor do I;—only that there is. You haven't read so many of their novels as I have."

"Who would ever think of learning to live out of an English novel?" said Carry.

"I am not saying that. You may teach him to live how you like afterwards. But if you have anything to do with people it must be well to know what their manners are. I think the richer sort of people in England slide into these things more gradually than we do. You stand your ground, Carry, and hold your own, and take the goods the gods provide you." Though Caroline Spalding opposed her sister's arguments, and was particularly hard upon that allusion to "the richer sort of people,"—which, as she knew, Miss Petrie would have regarded as evidence of reverence for sounding brasses and tinkling cymbals,—nevertheless she loved Livy dearly for what she said, and kissed the sweet counsellor, and resolved that she would for the present decline the invitation of the poetess. Then was Miss Petrie somewhat indignant with her friend, and threw out her scorn in those lines which have been mentioned.

But the American Minister hardly knew how to behave himself when he met Mr. Glascock, or even when he was called upon to speak of him. Florence no doubt is a large city, and is now the capital of a great kingdom; but still people meet in Florence much more frequently than they do in Paris or in London. It may almost be said that they whose habit it is to go into society, and whose circumstances bring them into the same circles, will see each other every day. Now the American Minister delighted to see and to be seen in all places frequented by persons of a certain rank and position in Florence. Having considered the matter much, he had convinced himself that he could thus

best do his duty as minister from the great Republic of Free States to the newest and,—as he called it,—"the freeest of the European kingdoms." The minister from France was a marquis; he from England was an earl; from Spain had come a count,—and so on. In the domestic privacy of his embassy Mr. Spalding would be severe enough upon the sounding brasses and the tinkling cymbals, and was quite content himself to be the Honourable Jonas G. Spalding,—Honourable because selected by his country for a post of honour; but he liked to be heard among the cymbals and seen among the brasses, and to feel that his position was as high as theirs. Mr. Glascock also was frequently in the same circles, and thus it came to pass that the two gentlemen saw each other almost daily. That Mr. Spalding knew well how to bear himself in his high place no one could doubt; but he did not quite know how to carry himself before Mr. Glascock. At home at Boston he would have been more completely master of the situation.

He thought too that he began to perceive that Mr. Glascock avoided him, though he would hear on his return home that that gentleman had been at the embassy, or had been walking in the Cascine with his nieces. That their young ladies should walk in public places with unmarried gentlemen is nothing to American fathers and guardians. American young ladies are accustomed to choose their own companions. But the minister was tormented by his doubts as to the ways of Englishmen, and as to the phase in which English habits might most properly exhibit themselves in Italy. He knew that people were talking about Mr. Glascock and his niece. Why then did Mr. Glascock avoid him?

It was perhaps natural that Mr. Spalding should have omitted to observe that Mr. Glascock was not delighted by those lectures on the American consitution which formed so large a part of his ordinary conversation with Englishmen.

It happened one afternoon that they were thrown together so closely for nearly an hour that neither could avoid the other. They were both at the old palace in which the Italian parliament is held, and were kept waiting during some long delay in the ceremonies of the place. They were seated next to each other, and during such delay there was nothing for them but to talk. On the other side of each of them was a stranger, and not to talk in such circumstances would be to quarrel. Mr. Glascock began by asking after the ladies.

"They are quite well, sir, thank you," said the minister. "I hope that Lord Peterborough was pretty well when last you heard from Naples, Mr. Glascock." Mr. Glascock explained that his father's condition was not much altered, and then there was silence for a moment.

"Your nieces will remain with you through the spring I suppose?" said Mr. Glascock.

"Such is their intention, sir."

"They seem to like Florence, I think."

"Yes;—yes; I think they do like Florence. They see this capital, sir, perhaps under more favourable circumstances than are accorded to most of my countrywomen. Our republican simplicity, Mr. Glascock, has this drawback, that away from home it subjects us somewhat to the cold shade of unobserved obscurity. That it possesses merits which much more than compensate for this trifling evil I should be the last man

in Europe to deny." It is to be observed that American citizens are always prone to talk of Europe. It affords the best counterpoise they know to that other term, America,—and America and the United States are of course the same. To speak of France or of England as weighing equally against their own country seems to an American to be an absurdity,—and almost an insult to himself. With Europe he can compare himself, but even this is done generally in the style of the Republican Browning when she addressed the Ancient Marbles.

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Glascock, "the family of a minister abroad has great advantages in seeing the country to which he is accredited."

"That is my meaning, sir. But, as I was remarking, we carry with us as a people no external symbols of our standing at home. The wives and daughters, sir, of the most honoured of our citizens have no nomenclature different than that which belongs to the least noted among us. It is perhaps a consequence of this that Europeans who are accustomed in their social intercourse to the assistance of titles, will not always trouble themselves to inquire who and what are the American citizens who may sit opposite to them at table. I have known, Mr. Glascock, the wife and daughter of a gentleman who has been thrice sent as senator from his native State to Washington, to remain as disregarded in the intercourse of a European city, as though they had formed part of the family of some grocer from your Russell Square!"

"Let the Miss Spaldings go where they will," said Mr. Glascock, "they will not fare in that way."

"The Miss Spaldings, sir, are very much obliged to you," said the minister with a bow.

"I regard it as one of the luckiest chances of my life that I was thrown in with them at St. Michael as I was," said Mr. Glascock with something like warmth.

"I am sure, sir, they will never forget the courtesy displayed by you on that occasion," said the minister bowing again.

"That was a matter of course. I and my friend would have done the same for the grocer's wife and daughter of whom you spoke. Little services such as that do not come from appreciation of merit, but are simply the payment of the debt due by all men to all women."

"Such is certainly the rule of living in our country, sir," said Mr. Spalding.

"The chances are," continued the Englishman, "that no further observation follows the payment of such a debt. It has been a thing of course."

"We delight to think it so, Mr. Glascock, in our own cities."

"But in this instance it has given rise to one of the pleasantest, and as I hope most enduring friendships that I have ever formed," said Mr. Glascock with enthusiasm. What could the American Minister do but bow again three times? And what other meaning could he attach to such words than that which so many of his friends had been attributing to Mr. Glascock for some weeks past? It had occurred to Mr. Spalding, even since he had been sitting in his present close proximity to Mr. Glascock, that it might possibly be his duty as an uncle having to deal with an Englishman, to ask that gentleman what were his

intentions. He would do his duty let it be what it might; but the asking of such a question would be very disagreeable to him. For the present he satisfied himself with inviting his neighbour to come and drink tea with Mrs. Spalding on the next evening but one. "The girls will be delighted, I am sure," said he, thinking himself to be justified in this friendly familiarity by Mr. Glascock's enthusiasm. For Mr. Spalding was clearly of opinion that, let the value of republican simplicity be what it might, an alliance with the crumbling marbles of Europe would in his niece's circumstances be not inexpedient. Mr. Glascock accepted the invitation with alacrity, and the minister when he was closeted with his wife that evening declared his opinion that after all the Britisher meant fighting. The aunt told the girls that Mr. Glascock was coming, and in order that it might not seem that a net was being specially spread for him, others were invited to join the party. Miss Petrie consented to be there, and the Italian, Count Buonarosci, to whose presence, though she could not speak to him, Mrs. Spalding was becoming accustomed. It was painful to her to feel that she could not communicate with those around her, and for that reason she would have avoided Italians. But she had an idea that she could not thoroughly realise the advantages of foreign travel unless she lived with foreigners; and, therefore, she was glad to become intimate at any rate with the outside of Count Buonarosci.

"I think your uncle is wrong, dear," said Miss Petrie early in the day to her friend.

"But why? He has done nothing more than what is just civil."

"If Mr. Glascock kept a store in Broadway he would not have thought it necessary to shew the same civility."

"Yes;—if we all liked the Mr. Glascock who kept the store."

"Caroline," said the poetess with severe eloquence, "can you put your hand upon your heart and say that this inherited title, this tinkling cymbal as I call it, has no attraction for you or yours? Is it the unadorned simple man that you welcome to your bosom, or a thing of stars and garters, a patch of parchment, the minion of a throne, the lordling of twenty descents, in which each has been weaker than that before it, the hero of a scutcheon, whose glory is in his quarterings, and whose worldly wealth comes from the sweat of serfs whom the euphonism of an effete country has learned to decorate with the name of tenants?"

But Caroline Spalding had a spirit of her own, and had already made up her mind that she would not be talked down by Miss Petrie. "Uncle Jonas," said she, "asks him because we like him; and would do so too if he kept the store in Broadway. But if he did keep the store perhaps we should not like him."

"I trow not," said Miss Petrie.

Livy was much more comfortable in her tactics, and without consulting anybody sent for a hairdresser. "It's all very well for Wallachia," said Livy,—Miss Petrie's name was Wallachia,—"but I know a nice sort of man when I see him, and the ways of the world are not to be altered because Wally writes poetry."

When Mr. Glascock was announced Mrs. Spalding's handsome rooms were almost filled, as rooms in

Florence are filled,—obstruction in every avenue, a crowd in every corner, and a block at every doorway, not being among the customs of the place. Mr. Spalding immediately caught him,—intercepting him between the passages and the ladies,—and engaged him at once in conversation.

"Your John S. Mill is a great man," said the minister.

"They tell me so," said Mr. Glascock. "I don't read what he writes myself."

This acknowledgment seemed to the minister to be almost disgraceful, and yet he himself had never read a word of Mr. Mill's writings. "He is a far-seeing man," continued the minister. "He is one of the few Europeans who can look forward, and see how the rivers of civilization are running on. He has understood that women must at last be put upon an equality with men."

"Can he manage that men shall have half the babies?" said Mr. Glascock, thinking to escape by an attempt at playfulness.

But the minister was down upon him at once,—had him by the lappet of his coat, though he knew how important it was for his dear niece that he should allow Mr. Glascock to amuse himself this evening after another fashion: "I have an answer ready, sir, for that difficulty," he said. "Step aside with me for a moment. The question is important, and I should be glad if you would communicate my ideas to your great philosopher. Nature, sir, has laid down certain laws, which are immutable; and, against them,——"

But Mr. Glascock had not come to Florence for this. There were circumstances in his present position

which made him feel that he would be gratified in escaping, even at the cost of some seeming incivility. "I must go in to the ladies at once," he said, "or I shall never get a word with them." There came across the minister's brow a momentary frown of displeasure, as though he felt that he were being robbed of that which was justly his own. For an instant his grasp fixed itself more tightly to the coat. It was quite within the scope of his courage to hold a struggling listener by physical strength;—but he remembered that there was a purpose, and he relaxed his hold.

"I will take another opportunity," said the minister. "As you have raised that somewhat trite objection of the bearing of children, which we in our country, sir, have altogether got over, I must put you in possession of my views on that subject; but I will find another occasion." Then Mr. Glascock began to reflect whether an American lady, married in England, would probably want to see much of her uncle in her adopted country.

Mrs. Spalding was all smiles when her guest reached her. "We did not mean to have such a crowd of people," she said, whispering; "but you know how one thing leads to another, and people here really like short invitations." Then the minister's wife bowed very low to an Italian lady, and for the moment wished herself in Beacon Street. It was a great trouble to her that she could not pluck up courage to speak a word in Italian. "I know more about it than some that are glib enough," she would say to her niece Livy, "but these Tuscans are so particular with their Bocca Toscana."

It was almost spiteful on the part of Miss Petrie,—

the manner in which, on this evening, she remained close to her friend Caroline Spalding It is hardly possible to believe that it came altogether from high principle,—from a determination to save her friend from an impending danger. One's friend has no right to decide for one what is, and what is not dangerous. Mr. Glascock after awhile found himself seated on a fixed couch, that ran along the wall, between Carry Spalding and Miss Petrie; but Miss Petrie was almost as bad to him as had been the minister himself. "I am afraid," she said, looking up into his face with some severity, and rushing upon her subject with audacity, "that the works of your Browning have not been received in your country with that veneration to which they are entitled."

"Do you mean Mr. or Mrs. Browning?" asked Mr. Glascock,—perhaps with some mistaken idea that the lady was out of her depth, and did not know the difference.

"Either;—both; for they are one, the same, and indivisible. The spirit and germ of each is so reflected in the outcome of the other, that one sees only the result of so perfect a combination, and one is tempted to acknowledge that here and there a marriage may have been arranged in Heaven. I don't think that in your country you have perceived this, Mr. Glascock."

"I am not quite sure that we have," said Mr. Glascock.

"Yours is not altogether an inglorious mission," continued Miss Petrie.

"I've got no mission," said Mr. Glascock,—"either from the Foreign Office, or from my own inner convictions."

Miss Petrie laughed with a scornful laugh. "I spoke, sir, of the mission of that small speck on the earth's broad surface, of which you think so much, and which we call Great Britain."

"I do think a good deal of it," said Mr. Glascock.

"It has been more thought of than any other speck of the same size," said Carry Spalding.

"True," said Miss Petrie, sharply;—"because of its iron and coal. But the mission I spoke of was this." And she put forth her hand with an artistic motion as she spoke. "It utters prophecies, though it cannot read them. It sends forth truth, though it cannot understand it. Though its own ears are deaf as adder's, it is the nursery of poets, who sing not for their own countrymen, but for the higher sensibilities and newer intelligences of lands, in which philanthropy has made education as common as the air that is breathed."

"Wally," said Olivia, coming up to the poetess, in anger that was almost apparent, "I want to take you, and introduce you to the Marchesa Pulti."

But Miss Petrie no doubt knew that the eldest son of an English lord was at least as good as an Italian marchesa. "Let her come here," said the poetess, with her grandest smile.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Withered Grass

When Caroline Spalding perceived how direct an attempt had been made by her sister to take the poetess away, in order that she might thus be left alone with

Mr. Glascock, her spirit revolted against the manœuvre, and she took herself away amidst the crowd. If Mr. Glascock should wish to find her again he could do so. And there came across her mind something of a half-formed idea that, perhaps after all her friend Wallachia was right. Were this man ready to take her and she ready to be taken, would such an arrangement be a happy one for both of them? His high-born, wealthy friends might very probably despise her, and it was quite possible that she also might despise them. To be Lady Peterborough, and have the spending of a large fortune, would not suffice for her happiness. She was sure of that. It would be a leap in the dark, and all such leaps must needs be dangerous, and therefore should be avoided. But she did like the man. Her friend was untrue to her and cruel in those allusions to tinkling cymbals. It might be well for her to get over her liking, and to think no more of one who was to her a foreigner and a stranger,—of whose ways of living in his own home she knew so little, whose people might be antipathetic to her, enemies instead of friends, among whom her life would be one long misery; but it was not on that ground that Miss Petrie had recommended her to start for Rome as soon as Mr. Glascock had reached Florence. "There is no reason," she said to herself, "why I should not marry a man if I like him, even though he be a lord. And of him I should not be the least afraid. It's the women that I fear." And then she called to mind all that she had ever heard of English countesses and duchesses. She thought that she knew that they were generally cold and proud, and very little given to receive outsiders graciously within their ranks. Mr. Glascock ha

an aunt who was a Duchess, and a sister who would be a Countess. Caroline Spalding felt how her back would rise against these new relations, if it should come to pass that they should look unkindly upon her when she was taken to her own home;—how she would fight with them, giving them scorn for scorn; how unutterably miserable she would be; how she would long to be back among her own equals, in spite even of her love for her husband. "How grand a thing it is," she said, "to be equal with those whom you love!" And yet she was to some extent allured by the social position of the man. She could perceive that he had a charm of manner which her countrymen lacked. He had read, perhaps, less than her uncle;—knew, perhaps, less than most of those men with whom she had been wont to associate in her own city life at home;—was not braver, or more virtuous, or more self-denying than they; but there was a softness and an ease in his manner which was palatable to her, and an absence of that too visible effort of the intellect which is so apt to mark and mar the conversation of Americans. She almost wished that she had been English, in order that the man's home and friends might have suited her. She was thinking of all this as she stood pretending to talk to an American lady, who was very eloquent on the delights of Florence.

In the meantime Olivia and Mr. Glascock had moved away together, and Miss Petrie was left alone. This was no injury to Miss Petrie, as her mind at once set itself to work on a sonnet touching the frivolity of modern social gatherings; and when she complained afterwards to Caroline that it was the curse of their mode of life that no moment could be allowed for

thought,—in which she referred specially to a few words that Mr. Gore had addressed to her at this moment of her meditations,—she was not wilfully a hypocrite. She was painfully turning her second set of rhymes, and really believed that she had been subjected to a hardship. In the meantime Olivia and Mr. Glascock were discussing her at a distance.

"You were being put through your facings, Mr. Glascock," Olivia had said.

"Well; yes; and your dear friend, Miss Petrie, is rather a stern examiner."

"She is Carry's ally,—not mine," said Olivia. Then she remembered that by saying this she might be doing her sister an injury. Mr. Glascock might object to such a bosom friend for his wife. "That is to say, of course we are all intimate with her, but just at this moment Carry is most in favour."

"She is very clever, I am quite sure," said he.

"Oh yes;—she's a genius. You must not doubt that on the peril of making every American in Italy your enemy."

"She is a poet,—is she not?"

"Mr. Glascock!"

"Have I said anything wrong?" he asked.

"Do you mean to look me in the face and tell me that you are not acquainted with her works,—that you don't know pages of them by heart,—that you don't sleep with them under your pillow, don't travel about with them in your dressing-bag? I'm afraid we have mistaken you, Mr. Glascock."

"Is it so great a sin?"

"If you'll own up honestly, I'll tell you something.

—in a whisper. You have not read a word of her poems?"

"Not a word."

"Neither have I. Isn't it horrible? But, perhaps, if I heard Tennyson talking every day, I shouldn't read Tennyson. Familiarity does breed contempt;—doesn't it? And then poor dear Wallachia is such a bore. I sometimes wonder, when English people are listening to her, whether they think that American girls generally talk like that."

"Not all, perhaps, with that perfected eloquence."

"I dare say you do," continued Olivia, craftily. "That is just the way in which people form their opinions about foreigners. Some specially self-asserting American speaks his mind louder than other people, and then you say that all Americans are self-asserting."

"But you are a little that way given, Miss Spalding."

"Because we are always called upon to answer accusations against us, expressed or unexpressed. We don't think ourselves a bit better than you; or, if the truth were known, half as good. We are always struggling to be as polished and easy as the French, or as sensible and dignified as the English; but when our defects are thrown in our teeth——"

"Wo throws them in your teeth, Miss Spalding?"

"You look it,—all of you,—if you do not speak it out. You do assume a superiority, Mr. Glascock; and that we cannot endure."

"I do not feel that I assume anything," said Mr. Glascock, meekly.

"If three gentlemen be together, an Englishman, a

Frenchman, and an American, is not the American obliged to be on his mettle to prove that he is somebody among the three? I admit that he is always claiming to be the first; but he does so only that he may not be too evidently the last. If you knew us, Mr. Glascock, you would find us to be very mild, and humble, and nice, and good, and clever, and kind, and charitable, and beautiful,—in short, the finest people that have as yet been created on the broad face of God's smiling earth." These last words she pronounced with a nasal twang, and in a tone of voice which almost seemed to him to be a direct mimicry of the American Minister. The upshot of the conversation, however, was that the disgust against Americans which, to a certain degree, had been excited in Mr. Glascock's mind by the united efforts of Mr. Spalding and the poetess, had been almost entirely dispelled. From all of which the reader ought to understand that Miss Olivia Spalding was a very clever young woman.

But nevertheless Mr. Glascock had not quite made up his mind to ask the elder sister to be his wife. He was one of those men to whom love-making does not come very easy, although he was never so much at his ease as when he was in company with ladies. He was sorely in want of a wife, but he was aware that at different periods during the last fifteen years he had been angled for as a fish. Mothers in England had tried to catch him, and of such mothers he had come to have the strongest possible detestation. He had seen the hooks,—or perhaps had fancied that he saw them when they were not there. Lady Janes and Lady Sarahs had been hard upon him, till he learned to buckle himself into triple armour when he went amongst

them, and yet he wanted a wife;—no man more sorely wanted one. The reader will perhaps remember how he went down to Nuncombe Putney in quest of a wife, but all in vain. The lady in that case had been so explicit with him that he could not hope for a more favourable answer; and, indeed, he would not have cared to marry a girl who had told him that she preferred another man to himself, even if it had been possible for him to do so. Now he had met a lady very different from those with whom he had hitherto associated,—but not the less manifestly a lady. Caroline Spalding was bright, pleasant, attractive, very easy to talk to, and yet quite able to hold her own. But the American Minister was—a bore; and Miss Petrie was—unbearable. He had often told himself that in this matter of marrying a wife he would please himself altogether, that he would allow himself to be tied down by no consideration of family pride,—that he would consult nothing but his own heart and feelings. As for rank, he could give that to his wife. As for money, he had plenty of that also. He wanted a woman that was not blasée with the world, that was not a fool, and who would respect him. The more he thought of it, the more sure he was that he had seen none who pleased him so well as Caroline Spalding; and yet he was a little afraid of taking a step that would be irrevocable. Perhaps the American Minister might express a wish to end his days at Monkhams, and might think it desirable to have Miss Petrie always with him as a private secretary in poetry!

"Between you and us, Mr. Glascock, the spark of sympathy does not pass with a strong flash," said a voice in his ear. As he turned round rapidly to face

his foe, he was quite sure, for the moment, that under no possible circumstances would he ever take an American woman to his bosom as his wife.

"No," said he; "no, no. I rather think that I agree with you."

"The antipathy is one," continued Miss Petrie, "which has been common on the face of the earth since the clown first trod upon the courtier's heels. It is the instinct of fallen man to hate equality, to desire ascendancy, to crush, to oppress, to tyrannise, to enslave. Then, when the slave is at last free, and in his freedom demands—equality, man is not great enough to take his enfranchised brother to his bosom."

"You mean negroes," said Mr. Glascock, looking round and planning for himself a mode of escape.

"Not negroes only,—not the enslaved blacks, who are now enslaved no more,—but the rising nations of white men wherever they are to be seen. You English have no sympathy with a people who claim to be at least your equals. The clown has trod upon the courtier's heels till the clown is clown no longer, and the courtier has hardly a court in which he may dangle his sword-knot."

"If so the clown might as well spare the courtier," not meaning the rebuke which his words implied.

"Ah—h,—but the clown will not spare the courtier, Mr. Glascock. I understand the gibe, and I tell you that the courtier shall be spared no longer; because he is useless. He shall be cut down together with the withered grasses and thrown into the oven, and there shall be an end of him." Then she turned round to appeal to an American gentleman who had joined them, and Mr. Glascock made his escape. "I hold it

to be the holiest duty which I owe to my country never to spare one of them when I meet him."

"They are all very well in their way," said the American gentleman.

"Down with them, down with them!" exclaimed the poetess, with a beautiful enthusiasm. In the meantime Mr. Glascock had made up his mind that he could not dare to ask Caroline Spalding to be his wife. There were certain forms of the American female so dreadful that no wise man would wilfully come in contact with them. Miss Petrie's ferocity was distressing to him, but her eloquence and enthusiasm were worse even than her ferocity. The personal incivility of which she had been guilty in calling him a withered grass was distasteful to him, as being opposed to his ideas of the customs of society; but what would be his fate if his wife's chosen friend should be for ever dinning her denunciation of withered grasses into his ear?

He was still thinking of all this when he was accosted by Mrs. Spalding. "Are you going to dear Lady Banbury's to-morrow?" she asked. Lady Banbury was the wife of the English Minister.

"I suppose I shall be there in the course of the evening."

"How very nice she is; is she not? I do like Lady Banbury;—so soft, and gentle, and kind."

"One of the pleasantest old ladies I know," said Mr. Glascock.

"It does not strike you so much as it does me," said Mrs. Spalding, with one of her sweetest smiles. "The truth is, we all value what we have not got. There are no Lady Banburys in our country, and

therefore we think the more of them when we meet them here. She is talking of going to Rome for the Carnival, and has asked Caroline to go with her. I am so pleased to find that my dear girl is such a favourite."

Mr. Glascock immediately told himself that he saw the hook. If he were to be fished for by this American aunt as he had been fished for by English mothers, all his pleasure in the society of Caroline Spalding would be at once over. It would be too much, indeed, if in this American household he were to find the old vices of an aristocracy superadded to young republican sins! Nevertheless Lady Banbury was, as he knew well, a person whose opinion about young people was supposed to be very good. She noticed those only who were worthy of notice; and to have been taken by the hand by Lady Banbury was acknowledged to be a passport into good society. If Caroline Spalding was in truth going to Rome with Lady Banbury, that fact was in itself a great confirmation of Mr. Glascock's good opinion of her. Mrs. Spalding had perhaps understood this; but had not understood that having just hinted that it was so, she should have abstained from saying a word more about her dear girl. Clever and well-practised must, indeed, be the hand of the fisher-woman in matrimonial waters who is able to throw her fly without showing any glimpse of the hook to the fish for whom she angles. Poor Mrs. Spalding, though with kindly instincts towards her niece she did on this occasion make some slight attempt at angling, was innocent of any concerted plan. It seemed to her to be so natural to say a good word in praise of her niece to the man whom she believed to be in love with her niece.

Caroline and Mr. Glascock did not meet each other again till late in the evening, and just as he was about to take his leave. As they came together each of them involuntarily looked round to see whether Miss Petrie was near. Had she been there nothing would have been said beyond the shortest farewell greeting. But Miss Petrie was afar off, electrifying some Italian by the vehemence of her sentiments, and the audacious volubility of a language in which all arbitrary restrictions were ignored. "Are you going?" she asked.

"Well;—I believe I am. Since I saw you last I've encountered Miss Petrie again, and I'm rather depressed."

"Ah;—you don't know her. If you did you wouldn't laugh at her."

"Laugh at her! Indeed I do not do that; but when I'm told that I'm to be thrown into the oven and burned because I'm such a worn-out old institution——"

"You don't mean to say that you mind that!"

"Not much, when it comes up in the ordinary course of conversation; but it palls upon one when it is asserted for the fourth or fifth time in an evening."

"Alas, alas!" exclaimed Miss Spalding, with mock energy.

"And why, alas?"

"Because it is so impossible to make the oil and vinegar of the old world and of the new mix together and suit each other."

"You think it is impossible, Miss Spalding?"

"I fear so. We are so terribly tender, and you are always pinching us on our most tender spot. And we never meet you without treading on your gouty toes."

"I don't think my toes are gouty," said he.

"I apologise to your own, individually, Mr. Glascock; but I must assert that nationally you are subject to the gout."

"That is, when I'm told over and over again that I'm to be cut down and thrown into the oven——"

"Never mind the oven now, Mr. Glascock. If my friend has been over-zealous I will beg pardon for her. But it does seem to me, indeed it does, with all the reverence and partiality I have for everything European,"—the word European was an offence to him, and he shewed that it was so by his countenance,—"that the idiosyncrasies of you and of us are so radically different, that we cannot be made to amalgamate and sympathise with each other thoroughly."

He paused for some seconds before he answered her, but it was so evident by his manner that he was going to speak, that she could neither leave him nor interrupt him. "I had thought that it might have been otherwise," he said at last, and the tone of his voice was so changed as to make her know that he was in earnest.

But she did not change her voice by a single note. "I'm afraid it cannot be so," she said, speaking after her old fashion—half in earnest, half in banter. "We may make up our minds to be very civil to each other when we meet. The threats of the oven may no doubt be dropped on our side, and you may abstain from expressing in words your sense of our inferiority."

"I never expressed anything of the kind," he said, quite in anger.

"I am taking you simply as the sample English-

man, not as Mr. Glascock, who helped me and my sister over the mountains. Such of us as have to meet in society may agree to be very courteous; but courtesy and cordiality are not only not the same, but they are incompatible."

"Why so?"

"Courtesy is an effort, and cordiality is free. I must be allowed to contradict the friend that I love; but I assent,—too often falsely,—to what is said to me by a passing acquaintance. In spite of what the Scripture says, I think it is one of the greatest privileges of a brother that he may call his brother a fool."

"Shall you desire to call your husband a fool?"

"My husband!"

"He will, I suppose, be at least as dear to you as a brother?"

"I never had a brother."

"Your sister, then! It is the same, I suppose?"

"If I were to have a husband, I hope he would be the dearest to me of all. Unless he were so, he certainly would not be my husband. But between a man and his wife there does not spring up that playful, violent intimacy admitting of all liberties, which comes from early nursery associations; and, then, there is the difference of sex."

"I should not like my wife to call me a fool," he said.

"I hope she may never have occasion to do so, Mr. Glascock. Marry an English wife in your own class,—as, of course, you will,—and then you will be safe."

"But I have set my heart fast on marrying an American wife," he said.

"Then I can't tell what may befall you. It's like enough, if you do that, that you may be called by some name you will think hard to bear. But you'll think better of it. Like should pair with like, Mr. Glascock. If you were to marry one of our young women, you would lose in dignity as much as she would lose in comfort." Then they parted, and she went off to say farewell to other guests. The manner in which she had answered what he had said to her had certainly been of a nature to stop any further speech of the same kind. Had she been gentle with him, then he would certainly have told her that she was the American woman whom he desired to take with him to his home in England.

CHAPTER XXV.

Dorothy's Fate.

TOWARDS the end of February Sir Peter Mancrudy declared Miss Stanbury to be out of danger, and Mr. Martin began to be sprightly on the subject, taking to himself no inconsiderable share of the praise accruing to the medical faculty in Exeter generally for the saving of a life so valuable to the city. "Yes, Mr. Burgess," Sir Peter said to old Barty of the bank, "our friend will get over it this time, and without any serious damage to her constitution, if she will only take care of herself." Barty made some inaudible grunt, intended to indicate his own indifference on the subject, and expressed his opinion to the chief clerk that old Jemima Wideawake,—as he was pleased to call her,—

was one of those tough customers who would never die. "It would be nothing to us, Mr. Barty, one way or the other," said the clerk; to which Barty Burgess assented with another grunt.

Camilla French declared that she was delighted to hear the news. At this time there had been some sort of a reconciliation between her and her lover. Mrs. French had extracted from him a promise that he would not go to Natal; and Camilla had commenced the preparations for her wedding. His visits to Heavitree were as few and far between as he could make them with any regard to decency; but the 31st of March was coming on quickly, and as he was to be made a possession of then for ever, it was considered to be safe and well to allow him some liberty in his present condition. "My dear, if they are driven, there is no knowing what they won't do," Mrs. French said to her daughter. Camilla had submitted with compressed lips and a slight nod of her head. She had worked very hard, but her day of reward was coming. It was impossible not to perceive,—both for her and her mother, —that the scantiness of Mr. Gibson's attention to his future bride was cause of some weak triumph to Arabella. She said that it was very odd that he did not come,—and once added with a little sigh that he used to come in former days, alluding to those happy days in which another love was paramount. Camilla could not endure this with an equal mind. "Bella, dear," she said, "we know what all that means. He has made his choice, and if I am satisfied with what he does now, surely you need not grumble." Miss Stanbury's illness had undoubtedly been a great source

of contentment to the family at Heavitree, as they had all been able to argue that her impending demise was the natural consequence of her great sin in the matter of Dorothy's proposed marriage. When, however, they heard from Mr. Martin that she would certainly recover, that Sir Peter's edict to that effect had gone forth, they were willing to acknowledge that Providence, having so far punished the sinner, was right in staying its hand and abstaining from the final blow. "I'm sure we are delighted," said Mrs. French, "for though she has said cruel things of us,—and so untrue too,—yet of course it is our duty to forgive her. And we do forgive her."

Dorothy had written three or four notes to Brooke since his departure, which contained simple bulletins of her aunt's health. She always began her letters with "My dear Mr. Burgess," and ended them with "yours truly." She never made any allusion to Brooke's declaration of love, or gave the slightest sign in her letters to shew that she even remembered it. At last she wrote to say that her aunt was convalescent; and, in making this announcement, she allowed herself some enthusiasm of expression. She was so happy, and was so sure that Mr. Burgess would be equally so! And her aunt had asked after her "dear Brooke," expressing her great satisfaction with him, in that he had come down to see her when she had been almost too ill to see anyone. In answer to this there came to her a real love-letter from Brooke Burgess. It was the first occasion on which he had written to her. The little bulletins had demanded no replies, and had received none. Perhaps there had been a shade of disappointment on Dorothy's side, in that she had written thrice,

and had been made rich with no word in return. But, although her heart had palpitated on hearing the postman's knock, and had palpitated in vain, she had told herself that it was all as it should be. She wrote to him, because she possessed information which it was necessary that she should communicate. He did not write to her, because there was nothing for him to tell. Then had come the love-letter, and in the love-letter there was an imperative demand for a reply.

What was she to do? To have recourse to Priscilla for advice was her first idea; but she herself believed that she owed a debt of gratitude to her aunt, which Priscilla would not take into account,—the existence of which Priscilla would by no means admit. She knew Priscilla's mind in this matter, and was sure that Priscilla's advice, whatever it might be, would be given without any regard to her aunt's views. And then Dorothy was altogether ignorant of her aunt's views. Her aunt had been very anxious that she should marry Mr. Gibson, but had clearly never admitted into her mind the idea that she might possibly marry Brooke Burgess; and it seemed to her that she herself would be dishonest, both to her aunt and to her lover, if she were to bind this man to herself without her aunt's knowledge. He was to be her aunt's heir, and she was maintained by her aunt's liberality! Thinking of all this, she at last resolved that she would take the bull by the horns, and tell her aunt. She felt that the task would be one almost beyond her strength. Thrice she went into her aunt's room, intending to make a clean breast. Thrice her courage failed her, and she left the room with her tale untold, excusing herself on various pretexts. Her aunt

had seemed to be not quite so well, or had declared herself to be tired, or had been a little cross;—or else Martha had come in at the nick of time. But there was Brooke Burgess's letter unanswered,—a letter that was read night and morning, and which was never for an instant out of her mind. He had demanded a reply, and he had a right at least to that. The letter had been with her for four entire days before she had ventured to speak to her aunt on the subject.

On the first of March Miss Stanbury came out of her bed-room for the first time. Dorothy, on the previous day, had decided on postponing her communication for this occasion; but, when she found herself sitting in the little sitting-room up-stairs close at her aunt's elbow, and perceived the signs of weakness which the new move had made conspicuous, and heard the invalid declare that the little journey had been almost too much for her, her heart misgave her. She ought to have told her tale while her aunt was still in bed. But presently there came a question, which put her into such a flutter that she was for the time devoid of all resolution. "Has Brooke written?" said Miss Stanbury.

"Yes,—aunt; he has written."

"And what did he say?" Dorothy was struck quite dumb. "Is there anything wrong?" And now, as Miss Stanbury asked the question, she seemed herself to have forgotten that she had two minutes before declared herself to be almost too feeble to speak. "I'm sure there is something wrong. What is it? I will know."

"There is nothing wrong, Aunt Stanbury."

"Where is the letter? Let me see it."

"I mean there is nothing wrong about him."

"What is it, then?"

"He is quite well, Aunt Stanbury."

"Show me the letter. I will see the letter. I know that there is something the matter. Do you mean to say you won't shew me Brooke's letter?"

There was a moment's pause before Dorothy answered. "I will shew you his letter;—though I am sure he didn't mean that I should shew it to anyone."

"He hasn't written evil of me?"

"No; no; no. He would sooner cut his hand off than say a word bad of you. He never says or writes anything bad of anybody. But——. Oh, aunt; I'll tell you everything. I should have told you before, only that you were ill."

Then Miss Stanbury was frightened. "What is it?" she said hoarsely, clasping the arms of the great chair, each with a thin, shrivelled hand.

"Aunt Stanbury, Brooke,—Brooke,—wants me to be his—wife!"

"What!"

"You cannot be more surprised than I have been, Aunt Stanbury; and there has been no fault of mine."

"I don't believe it," said the old woman.

"Now you may read the letter," said Dorothy, standing up. She was quite prepared to be obedient, but she felt that her aunt's manner of receiving the information was almost an insult.

"He must be a fool," said Miss Stanbury.

This was hard to bear, and the colour went and came rapidly across Dorothy's cheeks as she gave herself a few moments to prepare an answer. She already

perceived that her aunt would be altogether adverse to the marriage, and that therefore the marriage could never take place. She had never for a moment allowed herself to think otherwise, but, nevertheless, the blow was heavy on her. We all know how constantly hope and expectation will rise high within our own bosoms in opposition to our own judgment,—how we become sanguine in regard to events which we almost know can never come to pass. So it had been with Dorothy. Her heart had been almost in a flutter of happiness since she had had Brooke's letter in her possession, and yet she never ceased to declare to herself her own conviction that that letter could lead to no good result. In regard to her own wishes on the subject she had never asked herself a single question. As it had been quite beyond her power to bring herself to endure the idea of marrying Mr. Gibson, so it had been quite impossible to her not to long to be Brooke's wife from the moment in which a suggestion to that effect had fallen from his lips. This was a state of things so certain, so much a matter of course, that, though she had not spoken a word to him in which she owned her love, she had never for a moment doubted that he knew the truth,—and that everybody else concerned would know it too. But she did not suppose that her wishes would go for anything with her aunt. Brooke Burgess was to become a rich man as her aunt's heir, and her aunt would of course have her own ideas about Brooke's advancement in life. She was quite prepared to submit without quarrelling when her aunt should tell her that the idea must not be entertained. But the order might be given, the prohibition might be pronounced, without an insult to her own feelings as a

woman. "He must be a fool," Miss Stanbury had said, and Dorothy took time to collect her thoughts before she would reply. In the meantime her aunt finished the reading of the letter.

"He may be foolish in this," Dorothy said; "but I don't think you should call him a fool."

"I shall call him what I please. I suppose this was going on at the time when you refused Mr. Gibson."

"Nothing was going on. Nothing has gone on at all," said Dorothy, with as much indignation as she was able to assume.

"How can you tell me that? That is an untruth."

"It is not—an untruth," said Dorothy, almost sobbing, but driven at the same time to much anger.

"Do you mean to say that this is the first you ever heard of it?" And she held out the letter, shaking it in her thin hand.

"I have never said so, Aunt Stanbury."

"Yes, you did."

"I said that nothing—was—going on, when Mr. Gibson—was——If you choose to suspect me, Aunt Stanbury, I'll go away. I won't stay here if you suspect me. When Brooke spoke to me, I told him you wouldn't like it."

"Of course I don't like it." But she gave no reason why she did not like it.

"And there was nothing more till this letter came. I couldn't help his writing to me. It wasn't my fault."

"Psha!"

"If you are angry, I am very sorry. But you haven't a right to be angry."

"Go on, Dorothy; go on. I'm so weak that I can

hardly stir myself; it's the first moment that I've been out of my bed for weeks;—and of course you can say what you please. I know what it will be. I shall have to take to my bed again, and then,—in a very little time,—you can both—make fools of yourselves, —just as you like."

This was an argument against which Dorothy of course found it to be quite impossible to make continued combat. She could only shuffle her letter back into her pocket, and be, if possible, more assiduous than ever in her attentions to the invalid. She knew that she had been treated most unjustly, and there would be a question to be answered as soon as her aunt should be well as to the possibility of her remaining in the Close subject to such injustice; but let her aunt say what she might, or do what she might, Dorothy could not leave her for the present. Miss Stanbury sat for a considerable time quite motionless, with her eyes closed, and did not stir or make signs of life till Dorothy touched her arm, asking her whether she would not take some broth which had been prepared for her. "Where's Martha? Why does not Martha come?" said Miss Stanbury. This was a hard blow, and from that moment Dorothy believed that it would be expedient that she should return to Nuncombe Putney. The broth, however, was taken, while Dorothy sat by in silence. Only one word further was said that evening by Miss Stanbury about Brooke and his love affair. "There must be nothing more about this, Dorothy; remember that; nothing at all. I won't have it." Dorothy made no reply. Brooke's letter was in her pocket, and it should be answered that night. On the following day she would let her aunt know what

she had said to Brooke. Her aunt should not see the letter, but should be made acquainted with its purport in reference to Brooke's proposal of marriage.

"I won't have it!" That had been her aunt's command. What right had her aunt to give any command upon the matter? Then crossed Dorothy's mind, as she thought of this, a glimmering of an idea that no one can be entitled to issue commands who cannot enforce obedience. If Brooke and she chose to become man and wife by mutual consent, how could her aunt prohibit the marriage? Then there followed another idea, that commands are enforced by the threatening and, if necessary, by the enforcement of penalties. Her aunt had within her hand no penalty of which Dorothy was afraid on her own behalf; but she had the power of inflicting a terrible punishment on Brooke Burgess. Now Dorothy conceived that she herself would be the meanest creature alive if she were actuated by fears as to money in her acceptance or rejection of a man whom she loved as she did Brooke Burgess. Brooke had an income of his own which seemed to her to be ample for all purposes. But that which would have been sordid in her, did not seem to her to have any stain of sordidness for him. He was a man, and was bound to be rich if he could. And, moreover, what had she to offer in herself,—such a poor thing as was she,—to make compensation to him for the loss of fortune? Her aunt could inflict this penalty, and therefore the power was hers, and the power must be obeyed. She would write to Brooke in a manner that should convey to him her firm decision. But not the less on that account would she let her aunt know that she thought herself to have been ill-used. It was an insult

to her, a most ill-natured insult,—that telling her that Brooke had been a fool for loving her. And then that accusation against her of having been false, of having given one reason for refusing Mr. Gibson, while there was another reason in her heart,—of having been cunning and then untrue, was not to be endured. What would her aunt think of her if she were to bear such allegations without indignant protest? She would write her letter, and speak her mind to her aunt as soon as her aunt should be well enough to hear it.

As she had resolved, she wrote her letter that night before she went to bed. She wrote it with floods of tears, and a bitterness of heart which almost conquered her. She too had heard of love, and had been taught to feel that the success or failure of a woman's life depended upon that,—whether she did, or whether she did not, by such gifts as God might have given to her, attract to herself some man strong enough, and good enough, and loving enough to make straight for her her paths, to bear for her her burdens, to be the father of her children, the staff on which she might lean, and the wall against which she might grow, feeling the sunshine, and sheltered from the wind. She had ever estimated her own value so lowly as to have told herself often that such success could never come in her way. From her earliest years she had regarded herself as outside the pale within which such joys are to be found. She had so strictly taught herself to look forward to a blank existence, that she had learned to do so without active misery. But not the less did she know where happiness lay; and when the good thing came almost within her reach, when it seemed that God had given her gifts which might have sufficed,

when a man had sought her hand whose nature was such that she could have leaned on him with a true worship, could have grown against him as against a wall with perfect confidence, could have lain with her head upon his bosom, and have felt that of all spots that in the world was the most fitting for her,—when this was all but grasped, and must yet be abandoned, there came upon her spirit an agony so bitter that she had not before known how great might be the depth of human disappointment. But the letter was at last written, and when finished was as follows:—

"The Close, Exeter, March 1, 186—.

"DEAR BROOKE."

There had been many doubts about this; but at last they were conquered, and the name was written.

"I have shown your letter to my aunt, as I am sure you will think was best. I should have answered it before, only that I thought that she was not quite well enough to talk about it. She says, as I was sure she would, that what you propose is quite out of the question. I am aware that I am bound to obey her; and as I think that you also ought to do so, I shall think no more of what you have said to me and have written. It is quite impossible now, even if it might have been possible under other circumstances. I shall always remember your great kindness to me. Perhaps I ought to say that I am very grateful for the compliment you have paid me. I shall think of you always;—till I die.

"Believe me to be,

"Your very sincere friend,

"DOROTHY STANBURY."

The next day Miss Stanbury again came out of her room, and on the third day she was manifestly becoming stronger. Dorothy had as yet not spoken of her letter, but was prepared to do so as soon as she thought that a fitting opportunity had come. She had a word or two to say for herself; but she must not again subject herself to being told that she was taking her will of her aunt because her aunt was too ill to defend herself. But on the third day Miss Stanbury herself asked the question. "Have you written anything to Brooke?" she asked.

"I have answered his letter, Aunt Stanbury."

"And what have you said to him?"

"I have told him that you disapproved of it, and that nothing more must be said about it."

"Yes;—of course you made me out to be an ogre."

"I don't know what you mean by that, aunt. I am sure that I told him the truth."

"May I see the letter?"

"It has gone."

"But you have kept a copy," said Miss Stanbury.

"Yes; I have got a copy," replied Dorothy; "but I would rather not shew it. I told him just what I tell you."

"Dorothy, it is not at all becoming that you should have a correspondence with any young man of such a nature that you should be ashamed to shew it to your aunt."

"I am not ashamed of anything," said Dorothy sturdily.

"I don't know what young women in these days have come to," continued Miss Stanbury. "There is

no respect, no subjection, no obedience, and too often —no modesty."

"Does that mean me, Aunt Stanbury?" asked Dorothy.

"To tell you the truth, Dorothy, I don't think you ought to have been receiving love-letters from Brooke Burgess when I was lying ill in bed. I didn't expect it of you. I tell you fairly that I didn't expect it of you."

Then Dorothy spoke out her mind. "As you think that, Aunt Stanbury, I had better go away. And if you please I will,—when you are well enough to spare me."

"Pray don't think of me at all," said her aunt.

"And as for love-letters,—Mr. Burgess has written to me once. I don't think that there can be anything immodest, in opening a letter when it comes by the post. And as soon as I had it I determined to shew it to you. As for what happened before, when Mr. Burgess spoke to me, which was long, long after all that about Mr. Gibson was over, I told him that it couldn't be so; and I thought there would be no more about it. You were so ill that I could not tell you. Now you know it all."

"I have not seen your letter to him."

"I shall never shew it to anybody. But you have said things, Aunt Stanbury, that are very cruel."

"Of course! Everything I say is wrong."

"You have told me that I was telling untruths, and you have called me—immodest. That is a terrible word."

"You shouldn't deserve it then."

"I never have deserved it, and I won't bear it.

No; I won't. If Hugh heard me called that word, I believe he'd tear the house down."

"Hugh, indeed! He's to be brought in between us;—is he?"

"He's my brother, and of course I'm obliged to think of him. And if you please, I'll go home as soon as you are well enough to spare me."

Quickly after this there were very many letters coming and going between the house in the Close and the ladies at Nuncombe Putney, and Hugh Stanbury, and Brooke Burgess. The correspondent of Brooke Burgess was of course Miss Stanbury herself. The letters to Hugh and to Nuncombe Putney were written by Dorothy. Of the former we need be told nothing at the present moment; but the upshot of all poor Dolly's letters was, that on the tenth of March she was to return home to Nuncombe Putney, share once more her sister's bed and mother's poverty, and abandon the comforts of the Close. Before this became a definite arrangement Miss Stanbury had given way in a certain small degree. She had acknowledged that Dorothy had intended no harm. But this was not enough for Dorothy, who was conscious of no harm either done or intended. She did not specify her terms, or require specifically that her aunt should make apology for that word, immodest, or at least withdraw it; but she resolved that she would go unless it was most absolutely declared to have been applied to her without the slightest reason. She felt, moreover, that her aunt's house ought to be open to Brooke Burgess, and that it could not be open to them both. And so she went;—having resided under her aunt's roof between nine and ten months.

"Good-bye, Aunt Stanbury," said Dorothy, kissing her aunt, with a tear in her eye and a sob in her throat.

"Good-bye, my dear, good-bye." And Miss Stanbury, as she pressed her niece's hand, left in it a bank-note.

"I'm much obliged, aunt; I am indeed; but I'd rather not." And the bank-note was left on the parlour table.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Dorothy at Home.

DOROTHY was received at home with so much affection and such expressions of esteem as to afford her much consolation in her misery. Both her mother and her sister approved of her conduct. Mrs. Stanbury's approval was indeed accompanied by many expressions of regret as to the good things lost. She was fully alive to the fact that life in the Close at Exeter was better for her daughter than life in their little cottage at Nuncombe Putney. The outward appearance which Dorothy bore on her return home was proof of this. Her clothes, the set of her hair, her very gestures and motions had framed themselves on town ideas. The faded, wildered, washed-out look, the uncertain, purposeless bearing which had come from her secluded life and subjection to her sister had vanished from her. She had lived among people, and had learned something of their gait and carriage. Money we know will do almost everything, and no doubt money had had much to do with this. It is very pretty to talk of the alluring simplicity of a clean calico gown; but poverty

will shew itself to be meagre, dowdy, and draggled in a woman's dress, let the woman be ever so simple, ever so neat, ever so independent, and ever so high-hearted. Mrs. Stanbury was quite alive to all that her younger daughter was losing. Had she not received two offers of marriage while she was at Exeter? There was no possibility that offers of marriage should be made in the cottage at Nuncombe Putney. A man within the walls of the cottage would have been considered as much out of place as a wild bull. It had been matter of deep regret to Mrs. Stanbury that her daughter should not have found herself able to marry Mr. Gibson. She knew that there was no matter for reproach in this, but it was a misfortune,—a great misfortune. And in the mother's breast there had been a sad, unrepressed feeling of regret that young people should so often lose their chances in the world through over-fancifulness, and ignorance as to their own good. Now when she heard the story of Brooke Burgess, she could not but think that had Dorothy remained at Exeter, enduring patiently such hard words as her aunt might speak, the love affair might have been brought at some future time to a happy conclusion. She did not say all this; but there came on her a silent melancholy, made expressive by constant little shakings of the head and a continued reproachful sadness of demeanour, which was quite as intelligible to Priscilla as would have been any spoken words. But Priscilla's approval of her sister's conduct was clear, outspoken, and satisfactory. She had been quite sure that her sister had been right about Mr. Gibson; and was equally sure that she was now right about Brooke Burgess. Priscilla had in her mind an idea that if

B. B., as they called him, was half as good as her sister represented him to be,—for indeed Dorothy endowed him with every virtue consistent with humanity, —he would not be deterred from his pursuit either by Dolly's letter or by Aunt Stanbury's commands. But of this she thought it wise to say nothing. She paid Dolly the warm and hitherto unaccustomed compliment of equality, assuming to regard her sister's judgment and persistent independence to be equally strong with her own; and, as she knew well, she could not have gone further than this. "I never shall agree with you about Aunt Stanbury," she said. "To me she seems to be so imperious, so exacting, and also so unjust, as to be unbearable."

"But she is affectionate," said Dolly.

"So is the dog that bites you, and, for aught I know, the horse that kicks you. But it is ill living with biting dogs and kicking horses. But all that matters little as you are still your own mistress. How strange these nine months have been, with you in Exeter, while we have been at the Clock House. And here we are, together again in the old way, just as though nothing had happened." But Dorothy knew well that a great deal had happened, and that her life could never be as it had been heretofore. The very tone in which her sister spoke to her was proof of this. She had an infinitely greater possession in herself than had belonged to her before her residence at Exeter; but that possession was so heavily mortgaged and so burthened as to make her believe that the change was to be regretted.

At the end of the first week there came a letter from Aunt Stanbury to Dorothy. It began by saying

that Dolly had left behind her certain small properties which had now been made up in a parcel and sent by the railway, carriage paid. "But they weren't mine at all," said Dolly, alluding to certain books in which she had taken delight. "She means to give them to you," said Priscilla, "and I think you must take them." "And the shawl is no more mine than it is yours, though I wore it two or three times in the winter." Priscilla was of opinion that the shawl must be taken also. Then the letter spoke of the writer's health, and at last fell into such a strain of confidential gossip that Mrs. Stanbury, when she read it, could not understand that there had been a quarrel. "Martha says that she saw Camilla French in the street to-day, such a guy in her new finery as never was seen before except on May-day." Then in the postscript Dorothy was enjoined to answer this letter quickly. "None of your short scraps, my dear," said Aunt Stanbury.

"She must mean you to go back to her," said Mrs. Stanbury.

"No doubt she does," said Priscilla; "but Dolly need not go because my aunt means it. We are not her creatures."

But Dorothy answered her aunt's letter in the spirit in which it had been written. She asked after her aunt's health, thanked her aunt for the gift of the books,—in each of which her name had been clearly written, protested about the shawl, sent her love to Martha and her kind regards to Jane, and expressed a hope that C. F. enjoyed her new clothes. She described the cottage, and was funny about the cabbage stumps in the garden, and at last succeeded in con-

cocting a long epistle. "I suppose there will be a regular correspondence," said Priscilla.

Two days afterwards, however, the correspondence took altogether another form. The cottage in which they now lived was supposed to be beyond the beat of the wooden-legged postman, and therefore it was necessary that they should call at the post-office for their letters. On the morning in question Priscilla obtained a thick letter from Exeter for her mother, and knew that it had come from her aunt. Her aunt could hardly have found it necessary to correspond with Dorothy's mother so soon after that letter to Dorothy had been written had there not arisen some very peculiar cause. Priscilla, after much meditation, thought it better that the letter should be opened in Dorothy's absence, and in Dorothy's absence the following letter was read both by Priscilla and her mother.

"The Close, March 19, 186—.

"Dear Sister Stanbury,

"After much consideration, I think it best to send under cover to you the enclosed letter from Mr. Brooke Burgess, intended for your daughter Dorothy. You will see that I have opened it and read it,—as I was clearly entitled to do, the letter having been addressed to my niece while she was supposed to be under my care. I do not like to destroy the letter, though, perhaps, that would be best; but I would advise you to do so, if it be possible, without shewing it to Dorothy. I have told Mr. Brooke Burgess what I have done.

"I have also told him that I cannot sanction a marriage between him and your daughter. There are

many reasons of old date,—not to speak of present reasons also,—which would make such a marriage highly inexpedient. Mr. Brooke Burgess is, of course, his own master, but your daughter understands completely how the matter stands.

"Yours truly,

"JEMIMA STANBURY."

"What a wicked old woman!" said Priscilla. Then there arose a question whether they should read Brooke's letter, or whether they should give it unread to Dorothy. Priscilla denounced her aunt in the strongest language she could use for having broken the seal. "'Clearly entitled,'—because Dorothy had been living with her!" exclaimed Priscilla. "She can have no proper conception of honour or of honesty. She had no more right to open Dorothy's letter than she had to take her money." Mrs. Stanbury was very anxious to read Brooke's letter, alleging that they would then be able to judge whether it should be handed over to Dorothy. But Priscilla's sense of right would not admit of this. Dorothy must receive the letter from her lover with no further stain from unauthorised eyes than that to which it had been already subjected. She was called in, therefore, from the kitchen, and the whole packet was given to her. "Your aunt has read the enclosure, Dolly; but we have not opened it."

Dorothy took the packet without a word and sat herself down. She first read her aunt's letter very slowly. "I understand perfectly," she said, folding it up almost listlessly, while Brooke's letter lay still unopened on her lap. Then she took it up, and held it awhile in both hands, while her mother and Priscilla

watched her. "Priscilla," she said, "do you read it first."

Priscilla was immediately at her side, kissing her. "No, my darling; no," she said; "it is for you to read it." Then Dorothy took the precious contents from the envelope, and opened the folds of the paper. When she had read a dozen words, her eyes were so suffused with tears, that she could hardly make herself mistress of the contents of the letter; but she knew that it contained renewed assurances of her lover's love, and assurance on his part that he would take no refusal from her based on any other ground than that of her own indifference to him. He had written to Miss Stanbury to the same effect; but he had not thought it necessary to explain this to Dorothy; nor did Miss Stanbury in her letter tell them that she had received any communication from him. "Shall I read it now?" said Priscilla, as soon as Dorothy again allowed the letter to fall into her lap.

Both Priscilla and Mrs. Stanbury read it, and for awhile they sat with the two letters among them without much speech about them. Mrs. Stanbury was endeavouring to make herself believe that her sister-in-law's opposition might be overcome, and that then Dorothy might be married. Priscilla was inquiring of herself whether it would be well that Dorothy should defy her aunt,—so much, at any rate, would be well, —and marry the man, even to his deprivation of the old woman's fortune. Priscilla had her doubts about this, being very strong in her ideas of self-denial. That her sister should put up with the bitterest disappointment rather than injure the man she loved was right;—but then it would also be so extremely right to

defy Aunt Stanbury to her teeth! But Dorothy, in whose character was mixed with her mother's softness much of the old Stanbury strength, had no doubt in her mind. It was very sweet to be so loved. What gratitude did she not owe to a man who was so true to her! What was she that she should stand in his way? To lay herself down that she might be crushed in his path was no more than she owed to him. Mrs. Stanbury was the first to speak.

"I suppose he is a very good young man," she said.

"I am sure he is;—a noble, true-hearted man," said Priscilla.

"And why shouldn't he marry whom he pleases, as long as she is respectable?" said Mrs. Stanbury.

"In some people's eyes poverty is more disreputable than vice," said Priscilla.

"Your aunt has been so fond of Dorothy," pleaded Mrs. Stanbury.

"Just as she is of her servants," said Priscilla.

But Dorothy said nothing. Her heart was too full to enable her to defend her aunt; nor at the present moment was she strong enough to make her mother understand that no hope was to be entertained. In the course of the day she walked out with her sister on the road towards Ridleigh, and there, standing among the rocks and ferns, looking down upon the river, with the buzz of the little mill within her ears, she explained the feelings of her heart and her many thoughts with a flow of words stronger, as Priscilla thought, than she had ever used before.

"It is not what he would suffer now, Pris, or what he would feel, but what he would feel ten, twenty years

hence, when he would know that his children would have been all provided for, had he not lost his fortune by marrying me."

"He must be the only judge whether he prefers you to the old woman's money," said Priscilla.

"No, dear; not the only judge. And it isn't that, Pris,—not which he likes best now, but which it is best for him that he should have. What could I do for him?"

"You can love him."

"Yes;—I can do that." And Dorothy paused a moment, to think how exceedingly well she could do that one thing. "But what is that? As you said the other day, a dog can do that. I am not clever. I can't play, or talk French, or do things that men like their wives to do. And I have lived here all my life; and what am I, that for me he should lose a great fortune?"

"That is his look out."

"No, dearest;—it is mine, and I will look out. I shall be able, at any rate, to remember always that I have loved him, and have not injured him. He may be angry with me now,"—and there was a feeling of pride at her heart, as she thought that he would be angry with her, because she did not go to him,—"but he will know at last that I have been as good to him as I knew how to be."

Then Priscilla wound her arms round Dorothy, and kissed her. "My sister," she said; "my own sister!" They walked on further, discussing the matter in all its bearings, talking of the act of self-denial which Dorothy was called on to perform, as though it were some abstract thing, the performance of which was, or

perhaps was not, imperatively demanded by the laws which should govern humanity; but with no idea on the mind of either of them that there was any longer a doubt as to this special matter in hand. They were away from home over three hours; and, when they returned, Dorothy at once wrote her two letters. They were very simple, and very short. She told Brooke, whom she now addressed as "Dear Mr. Burgess," that it could not be as he would have it; and she told her aunt,—with some terse independence of expression, which Miss Stanbury quite understood,—that she had considered the matter, and had thought it right to refuse Mr. Burgess's offer.

"Don't you think she is very much changed?" said Mrs. Stanbury to her eldest daughter.

"Not changed in the least, mother; but the sun has opened the bud, and now we see the fruit."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Mr. Bozzle at Home.

It had now come to pass that Trevelyan had not a friend in the world to whom he could apply in the matter of his wife and family. In the last communication which he had received from Lady Milborough she had scolded him, in terms that were for her severe, because he had not returned to his wife and taken her off with him to Naples. Mr. Bideawhile had found himself obliged to decline to move in the matter at all. With Hugh Stanbury Trevelyan had had a direct quarrel. Mr. and Mrs. Outhouse he regarded as bitter enemies, who had taken the part of his wife without any regard to the decencies of life. And now it had

come to pass that his sole remaining ally, Mr. Samuel Bozzle, the ex-policeman, was becoming weary of his service. Trevelyan remained in the north of Italy up to the middle of March, spending a fortune in sending telegrams to Bozzle, instigating Bozzle by all the means in his power to obtain possession of the child, desiring him at one time to pounce down upon the parsonage of St. Diddulph's with a battalion of policemen armed to the teeth with the law's authority, and at another time suggesting to him to find his way by stratagem into Mr. Outhouse's castle and carry off the child in his arms. At last he sent word to say that he himself would be in England before the end of March, and would see that the majesty of the law should be vindicated in his favour.

Bozzle had in truth made but one personal application for the child at St. Diddulph's. In making this he had expected no success, though, from the energetic nature of his disposition, he had made the attempt with some zeal. But he had never applied again at the parsonage, disregarding the letters, the telegrams, and even the promises which had come to him from his employer with such frequency. The truth was that Mrs. Bozzle was opposed to the proposed separation of the mother and the child, and that Bozzle was a man who listened to the words of his wife. Mrs. Bozzle was quite prepared to admit that Madame T., —as Mrs. Trevelyan had come to be called at No. 55, Stony Walk,—was no better than she should be. Mrs. Bozzle was disposed to think that ladies of quality, among whom Madame T. was entitled in her estimation to take rank, were seldom better than they ought to be, and she was quite willing that her husband should

earn his bread by watching the lady or the lady's lover. She had participated in Bozzle's triumph when he had discovered that the Colonel had gone to Devonshire, and again when he had learned that the Lothario had been at St. Diddulph's. And had the case been brought before the judge ordinary by means of her husband's exertions, she would have taken pleasure in reading every word of the evidence, even though her husband should have been ever so roughly handled by the lawyers. But now, when a demand was made upon Bozzle to violate the sanctity of the clergyman's house, and withdraw the child by force or stratagem, she began to perceive that the palmy days of the Trevelyan affair were over for them, and that it would be wise on her husband's part gradually to back out of the gentleman's employment. "Just put it on the fire-back, Bozzle," she said one morning, as her husband stood before her reading for the second time a somewhat lengthy epistle which had reached him from Italy, while he held the baby over his shoulder with his left arm. He had just washed himself at the sink, and though his face was clean, his hair was rough, and his shirt sleeves were tucked up.

"That's all very well, Maryanne; but when a party has took a gent's money, a party is bound to go through with the job."

"Gammon, Bozzle."

"It's all very well to say gammon; but his money has been took,—and there's more to come."

"And ain't you worked for the money,—down to Hexeter one time, across the water pretty well day and night watching that ere clergyman's 'ouse like a cat? What more'd he have? As to the child, I won't

hear of it, B. The child shan't come here. We'd all be shewed up in the papers as that black, that they'd hoot us along the streets. It ain't the regular line of business, Bozzle; and there ain't no good to be got, never, by going off the regular line." Whereupon Bozzle scratched his head and again read the letter. A distinct promise of a hundred pounds was made to him, if he would have the child ready to hand over to Trevelyan on Trevelyan's arrival in England.

"It ain't to be done, you know," said Bozzle.

"Of course it ain't," said Mrs. Bozzle.

"It ain't to be done anyways;—not in my way of business. Why didn't he go to Skint, as I told him, when his own lawyer was too dainty for the job? The paternal parent has a right to his hinfants, no doubt." That was Bozzle's law.

"I don't believe it, B."

"But he have, I tell you."

"He can't suckle 'em;—can he? I don't believe a bit of his rights."

"When a married woman has followers, and the husband don't go the wrong side of the post too, or it ain't proved again him that he do, they'll never let her have nothing to do with the children. It's been before the court a hundred times. He'll get the child fast enough if he'll go before the court."

"Anyways it ain't your business, Bozzle, and don't you meddle nor make. The money's good money as long as it's honest earned; but when you come to rampaging and breaking into a gent's house, then I say money may be had a deal too hard." In this special letter, which had now come to hand, Bozzle was not instructed to "rampage." He was simply de-

sired to make a further official requisition for the boy at the parsonage, and to explain to Mr. Outhouse, Mrs. Outhouse, and Mrs. Trevelyan, or to as many of them as he could contrive to see, that Mr. Trevelyan was immediately about to return to London, and that he would put the law into execution if his son were not given up to him at once. "I'll tell you what it is, B.," exclaimed Mrs. Bozzle, "it's my belief as he ain't quite right up here;" and Mrs. Bozzle touched her forehead.

"It's love for her as has done it then," said Bozzle, shaking his head.

"I'm not a taking of her part, B. A woman as has a husband as finds her with her wittels regular, and with what's decent and comfortable beside, ought to be contented. I've never said no other than that. I ain't no patience with your saucy madames as can't remember as they're eating an honest man's bread. Drat 'em all; what is it they wants? They don't know what they wants. It's just hidleness,—cause there ain't a ha'porth for 'em to do. It's that as makes 'em——,I won't say what. But as for this here child, B.——" At that moment there came a knock at the door. Mrs. Bozzle going into the passage, opened it herself, and saw a strange gentleman. Bozzle, who had stood at the inner door, saw that the gentleman was Mr. Trevelyan.

The letter, which was still in the ex-policeman's hand, had reached Stony Walk on the previous day; but the master of the house had been absent, finding out facts, following up his profession, and earning an honest penny. Trevelyan had followed his letter quicker than he had intended when it was written,

and was now with his prime minister, before his prime minister had been able to take any action on the last instruction received. "Does one Mr. Samuel Bozzle live here?" asked Trevelyan. Then Bozzle came forward and introduced his wife. There was no one else present except the baby, and Bozzle intimated that let matters be as delicate as they might, they could be discussed with perfect security in his wife's presence. But Trevelyan was of a different opinion, and he was disgusted and revolted,—most unreasonably,—by the appearance of his minister's domestic arrangements. Bozzle had always waited upon him with a decent coat, and a well-brushed hat, and clean shoes. It is very much easier for such men as Mr. Bozzle to carry decency of appearance about with them than to keep it at home. Trevelyan had never believed his ally to be more than an ordinary ex-policeman, but he had not considered how unattractive might be the interior of a private detective's private residence. Mrs. Bozzle had set a chair for him, but he had declined to sit down. The room was dirty, and very close,—as though no breath of air was ever allowed to find entrance there. "Perhaps you could put on your coat, and walk out with me for a few minutes," said Trevelyan. Mrs. Bozzle, who well understood that business was business, and that wives were not business, felt no anger at this, and handed her husband his best coat. The well-brushed hat was fetched from a cupboard, and it was astonishing to see how easily and how quickly the outer respectability of Bozzle was restored.

"Well?" said Trevelyan, as soon as they were together in the middle of Stony Walk.

"There hasn't been nothing to be done, sir," said Bozzle.

"Why not?" Trevelyan could perceive at once that the authority which he had once respected had gone from the man. Bozzle away from his own home, out on business, with his coat buttoned over his breast, and his best hat in his hand, was aware that he commanded respect,—and he could carry himself accordingly. He knew himself to be somebody, and could be easy, self-confident, confidential, severe, authoritative, or even arrogant, as the circumstances of the moment might demand. But he had been found with his coat off, and a baby in his arms, and he could not recover himself. "I do not suppose that anybody will question my right to have the care of my own child," said Trevelyan.

"If you would have gone to Mr. Skint, sir,—" suggested Bozzle. "There ain't no smarter gent in all the profession, sir, than Mr. Skint."

Mr. Trevelyan made no reply to this, but walked on in silence, with his minister at his elbow. He was very wretched, understanding well the degradation to which he was subjecting himself in discussing his wife's conduct with this man;—but with whom else could he discuss it? The man seemed to be meaner now than he had been before he had been seen in his own home. And Trevelyan was conscious too that he himself was not in outward appearance as he used to be;—that he was ill-dressed, and haggard, and worn, and visibly a wretched being. How can any man care to dress himself with attention who is always alone, and always miserable when alone? During the months which had passed over him since he had sent his wife away from

him, his very nature had been altered, and he himself was aware of the change. As he went about, his eyes were ever cast downwards, and he walked with a quick shuffling gait, and he suspected others, feeling that he himself was suspected. And all work had ceased with him. Since she had left him he had not read a single book that was worth the reading. And he knew it all. He was conscious that he was becoming disgraced and degraded. He would sooner have shot himself than have walked into his club, or even have allowed himself to be seen by daylight in Pall Mall, or Piccadilly. He had taken in his misery to drinking little drops of brandy in the morning, although he knew well that there was no shorter road to the devil than that opened by such a habit. He looked up for a moment at Bozzle, and then asked him a question. "Where is he now?"

"You mean the Colonel, sir. He's up in town, sir, a minding of his parliamentary duties. He have been up all this month, sir."

"They haven't met?"

Bozzle paused a moment before he replied, and then smiled as he spoke. "It is so hard to say, sir. Ladies is so cute and cunning. I've watched as sharp as watching can go, pretty near. I've put a youngster on at each hend, and both of 'em 'd hear a mouse stirring in his sleep. I ain't got no evidence, Mr. Trevelyan. But if you ask me my opinion, why in course they've been together somewhere. It stands to reason, Mr. Trevelyan; don't it?" And Bozzle as he said this smiled almost aloud.

"D——n and b——t it all for ever!" said Trevelyan, gnashing his teeth, and moving away into Union

Street as fast as he could walk. And he did go away, leaving Bozzle standing in the middle of Stony Walk.

"He's disturbed in his mind,—quite 'orrid," Bozzle said when he got back to his wife. "He cursed and swore as made even me feel bad."

"B.!," said his wife, "do you listen to me. Get in what's a howing, and don't you have nothing more to do with it."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Another Struggle.

Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley were to reach England about the end of March or the beginning of April, and both Mrs. Trevelyan and Nora Rowley were almost sick for their arrival. Both their uncle and aunt had done very much for them, had been true to them in their need, and had submitted to endless discomforts in order that their nieces might have respectable shelter in their great need; but nevertheless their conduct had not been of a kind to produce either love or friendship. Each of the sisters felt that she had been much better off at Nuncombe Putney, and that either the weakness of Mrs. Stanbury, or the hardness of Priscilla, was preferable to the repulsive forbearance of their clerical host. He did not scold them. He never threw it in Mrs. Trevelyan's teeth that she had been separated from her husband by her own fault; he did not tell them of his own discomfort. But he showed it in every gesture, and spoke of it in every tone of his voice;—so that Mrs. Trevelyan could not refrain from apologising for the misfortune of her presence.

"My dear," he said, "things can't be pleasant and

unpleasant at the same time. You were quite right to come here. I am glad for all our sakes that Sir Marmaduke will be with us so soon."

She had almost given up in her mind the hope that she had long cherished, that she might some day be able to live again with her husband. Every step which he now took in reference to her seemed to be prompted by so bitter an hostility, that she could not but believe that she was hateful to him. How was it possible that a husband and his wife should again come together, when there had been between them such an emissary as a detective policeman? Mrs. Trevelyan had gradually come to learn that Bozzle had been at Nuncombe Putney, watching her, and to be aware that she was still under the surveillance of his eye. For some months past now she had neither seen Colonel Osborne, nor heard from him. He had certainly by his folly done much to produce the ruin which had fallen upon her; but it never occurred to her to blame him. Indeed she did not know that he was liable to blame. Mr. Outhouse always spoke of him with indignant scorn, and Nora had learned to think that much of their misery was due to his imprudence. But Mrs. Trevelyan would not see this, and, not seeing it, was more widely separated from her husband than she would have been had she acknowledged that any excuse for his misconduct had been afforded by the vanity and folly of the other man.

Lady Rowley had written to have a furnished house taken for them from the first of April, and a house had been secured in Manchester Street. The situation in question is not one which is of itself very charming, nor is it supposed to be in a high degree fashionable;

but Nora looked forward to her escape from St. Diddulph's to Manchester Street as though Paradise were to be re-opened to her as soon as she should be there with her father and mother. She was quite clear now as to her course about Hugh Stanbury. She did not doubt but that she could so argue the matter as to get the consent of her father and mother. She felt herself to be altogether altered in her views of life, since experience had come upon her, first at Nuncombe Putney, and after that, much more heavily and seriously, at St. Diddulph's. She looked back as though to a childish dream to the ideas which had prevailed with her when she had told herself, as she used to do so frequently, that she was unfit to be a poor man's wife. Why should she be more unfit for such a position than another? Of course there were many thoughts in her mind, much of memory if nothing of regret, in regard to Mr. Glascock and the splendour that had been offered to her. She had had her chance of being a rich man's wife, and had rejected it,—had rejected it twice, with her eyes open. Readers will say that if she loved Hugh Stanbury with all her heart, there could be nothing of regret in her reflections. But we are perhaps accustomed in judging for ourselves and of others to draw the lines too sharply, and to say that on this side lie vice, folly, heartlessness, and greed,—and on the other honour, love, truth, and wisdom,—the good and the bad each in its own domain. But the good and the bad mix themselves so thoroughly in our thoughts, even in our aspirations, that we must look for excellence rather in overcoming evil than in freeing ourselves from its influence. There had been many moments of regret with Nora;—but none of remorse. At the very moment in

which she had sent Mr. Glascock away from her, and had felt that he had now been sent away for always, she had been full of regret. Since that there had been many hours in which she had thought of her own self-lesson, of that teaching by which she had striven to convince herself that she could never fitly become a poor man's wife. But the upshot of it all was a healthy pride in what she had done, and a strong resolution that she would make shirts and hem towels for her husband if he required it. It had been given her to choose, and she had chosen. She had found herself unable to tell a man that she loved him when she did not love him,—and equally unable to conceal the love which she did feel. "If he wheeled a barrow of turnips about the street, I'd marry him to-morrow," she said to her sister one afternoon as they were sitting together in the room which ought to have been her uncle's study.

"If he wheeled a big barrow, you'd have to wheel a little one," said her sister.

"Then I'd do it. I shouldn't mind. There has been this advantage in St. Diddulph's, that nothing can be triste, nothing dull, nothing ugly after it."

"It may be so with you, Nora;—that is in imagination."

"What I mean is that living here has taught me much that I never could have learned in Curzon Street. I used to think myself such a fine young woman,—but, upon my word, I think myself a finer one now."

"I don't quite know what you mean."

"I don't quite know myself; but I nearly know. I do know this, that I've made up my own mind about what I mean to do."

"You'll change it, dear, when mamma is here, and things are comfortable again. It's my belief that Mr. Glascock would come to you again to-morrow if you would let him." Mrs. Trevelyan was, naturally, in complete ignorance of the experience of transatlantic excellence which Mr. Glascock had encountered in Italy.

"But I certainly should not let him. How would it be possible after what I wrote to Hugh?"

"All that might pass away," said Mrs. Trevelyan, — slowly, after a long pause.

"All what might pass away? Have I not given him a distinct promise? Have I not told him that I loved him, and sworn that I would be true to him? Can that be made to pass away,—even if one wished it?"

"Of course it can. Nothing need be fixed for you till you have stood at the altar with a man and been made his wife. You may choose still. I can never choose again."

"I never will, at any rate," said Nora.

Then there was another pause. "It seems strange to me, Nora," said the elder sister, "that after what you have seen you should be so keen to be married to any one."

"What is a girl to do?"

"Better drown herself than do as I have done. Only think what there is before me. What I have gone through is nothing to it. Of course I must go back to the Islands. Where else am I to live? Who else will take me?"

"Come to us," said Nora.

"Us, Nora! Who are the us? But in no way

would that be possible. Papa will be here, perhaps, for six months." Nora thought it quite possible that she might have a home of her own before six months were passed,—even though she might be wheeling the smaller barrow,—but she would not say so. "And by that time everything must be decided."

"I suppose it must."

"Of course papa and mamma must go back," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"Papa might take a pension. He's entitled to a pension now."

"Hell never do that as long as he can have employment. They'll go back, and I must go with them. Who else would take me in?"

"I know who would take you in, Emily."

"My darling, that is romance. As for myself, I should not care where I went. If it were even to remain here, I could bear it."

"I could not," said Nora, decisively.

"It is so different with you, dear. I don't suppose it is possible I should take my boy with me to the Islands; and how—am I—to go—anywhere—without him?" Then she broke down, and fell into a paroxysm of sobs, and was in very truth a broken-hearted woman.

Nora was silent for some minutes, but at last she spoke. "Why do you not go back to him, Emily?"

"How am I to go back to him? What am I to do to make him take me back?" At this very moment Trevelyan was in the house, but they did not know it.

"Write to him," said Nora.

"What am I to say? In very truth I do believe that he is mad. If I write to him, should I defend

myself or accuse myself? A dozen times I have striven to write such a letter,—not that I might send it, but that I might find what I could say should I ever wish to send it. And it is impossible. I can only tell him how unjust he has been, how cruel, how mad, how wicked!"

"Could you not say to him simply this?—'Let us be together, wherever it may be; and let bygones be bygones.'"

"While he is watching me with a policeman? While he is still thinking that I entertain a—lover? While he believes that I am the base thing that he has dared to think me?"

"He has never believed it."

"Then how can he be such a villain as to treat me like this? I could not go to him, Nora;—not unless I went to him as one who was known to be mad, over whom in his wretched condition it would be my duty to keep watch. In no other way could I overcome my abhorrence of the outrages to which he has subjected me."

"But for the child's sake, Emily."

"Ah, yes! If it were simply to grovel in the dust before him it should be done. If humiliation would suffice,—or any self-abasement that were possible to me! But I should be false if I said that I look forward to any such possibility. How can he wish to have me back again after what he has said and done? I am his wife, and he has disgraced me before all men by his own words. And what have I done, that I should not have done;—what left undone on his behalf that I should have done? It is hard that the foolish

workings of a weak man's mind should be able so completely to ruin the prospects of a woman's life!"

Nora was beginning to answer this by attempting to shew that the husband's madness was, perhaps, only temporary, when there came a knock at the door, and Mrs. Outhouse was at once in the room. It will be well that the reader should know what had taken place at the parsonage while the two sisters had been together up-stairs, so that the nature of Mrs. Outhouse's mission to them may explain itself. Mr. Outhouse had been in his closet down-stairs, when the maid-servant brought word to him that Mr. Trevelyan was in the parlour, and was desirous of seeing him.

"Mr. Trevelyan!" said the unfortunate clergyman, holding up both his hands. The servant understood the tragic importance of the occasion quite as well as did her master, and simply shook her head. "Has your mistress seen him?" said the master. The girl again shook her head. "Ask your mistress to come to me," said the clergyman. Then the girl disappeared; and in a few minutes Mrs. Outhouse, equally imbued with the tragic elements of the day, was with her husband.

Mr. Outhouse began by declaring that no consideration should induce him to see Trevelyan, and commissioned his wife to go to the man and tell him that he must leave the house. When the unfortunate woman expressed an opinion that Trevelyan had some legal rights upon which he might probably insist, Mr. Outhouse asserted roundly that he could have no legal right to remain in that parsonage against the will of the rector. "If he wants to claim his wife and child, he must do it by law,—not by force; and thank God,

Sir Marmaduke will be here before he can do that." "But I can't make him go," said Mrs. Outhouse. "Tell him that you'll send for a policeman," said the clergyman.

It had come to pass that there had been messages backwards and forwards between the visitor and the master of the house, all carried by that unfortunate lady. Trevelyan did not demand that his wife and child should be given up to him;—did not even, on this occasion, demand that his boy should be surrendered to him,—now, at once. He did say, very repeatedly, that of course he must have his boy, but seemed to imply that, under certain circumstances, he would be willing to take his wife to live with him again. This appeared to Mrs. Outhouse to be so manifestly the one thing that was desirable,—to be the only solution of the difficulty that could be admitted as a solution at all,—that she went to work on that hint, and ventured to entertain a hope that a reconciliation might be effected. She implored her husband to lend a hand to the work;—by which she intended to imply that he should not only see Trevelyan, but consent to meet the sinner on friendly terms. But Mr. Outhouse was on the occasion even more than customarily obstinate. His wife might do what she liked. He would neither meddle nor make. He would not willingly see Mr. Trevelyan in his own house;—unless, indeed, Mr. Trevelyan should attempt to force his way up into the nursery. Then he said that which left no doubt on his wife's mind that, should any violence be attempted, her husband would manfully join the mêlée.

But it soon became evident that no such attempt was to be made on that day. Trevelyan was lachry-

mose, heartbroken, and a sight pitiable to behold. When Mrs. Outhouse loudly asserted that his wife had not sinned against him in the least,—"not in a tittle, Mr. Trevelyan," she repeated over and over again,—he began to assert himself, declaring that she had seen the man in Devonshire, and corresponded with him since she had been at St. Diddulph's; and when the lady had declared that the latter assertion was untrue, he had shaken his head, and had told her that perhaps she did not know all. But the misery of the man had its effect upon her, and at last she proposed to be the bearer of a message to his wife. He had demanded to see his child, offering to promise that he would not attempt to take the boy by force on this occasion,—saying, also, that his claim by law was so good, that no force could be necessary. It was proposed by Mrs. Outhouse that he should first see the mother,—and to this he at last assented. How blessed a thing would it be if these two persons could be induced to forget the troubles of the last twelve months, and once more to love and trust each other! "But, sir;" said Mrs. Outhouse, putting her hand upon his arm;—"you must not upbraid her, for she will not bear it." "She knows nothing of what is due to a husband," said Trevelyan, gloomily. The task was not hopeful; but, nevertheless, the poor woman resolved to do her best.

And now Mrs. Outhouse was in her niece's room, asking her to go down and see her husband. Little Louis had at the time been with the nurse, and the very moment that the mother heard that the child's father was in the house, she jumped up and rushed away to get possession of her treasure. "Has he come for baby?" Nora asked in dismay. Then Mrs. Out-

house, anxious to obtain a convert to her present views, boldly declared that Mr. Trevelyan had no such intention. Mrs. Trevelyan came back at once with the boy, and then listened to all her aunt's arguments. "But I will not take baby with me," she said. At last it was decided that she should go down alone, and that the child should afterwards be taken to his father in the drawing-room; Mrs. Outhouse pledging herself that the whole household should combine in her defence if Mr. Trevelyan should attempt to take the child out of that room. "But what am I to say to him?" she asked.

"Say as little as possible," said Mrs. Outhouse,—"except to make him understand that he has been in error in imputing fault to you."

"He will never understand that," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

A considerable time elapsed after that before she could bring herself to descend the stairs. Now that her husband was so near her, and that her aunt had assured her that she might reinstate herself in her position, if she could only abstain from saying hard words to him, she wished that he was away from her again, in Italy. She knew that she could not refrain from hard words. How was it possible that she should vindicate her own honour, without asserting with all her strength that she had been ill-used; and, to speak truth on the matter, her love for the man, which had once been true and eager, had been quelled by the treatment she had received. She had clung to her love in some shape, in spite of the accusations made against her, till she had heard that the policeman had been set upon her heels. Could it be possible that any wo-

man should love a man, or at least that any wife should love a husband, after such usage as that? At last she crept gently down the stairs, and stood at the parlour-door. She listened, and could hear his steps, as he paced backwards and forwards through the room. She looked back, and could see the face of the servant peering round from the kitchen-stairs. She could not endure to be watched in her misery, and, thus driven, she opened the parlour-door. "Louis," she said, walking into the room, "Aunt Mary has desired me to come to you."

"Emily!" he exclaimed, and ran to her and embraced her. She did not seek to stop him, but she did not return the kiss which he gave her. Then he held her by her hands, and looked into her face, and she could see how strangely he was altered. She thought that she would hardly have known him, had she not been sure that it was he. She herself was also changed. Who can bear sorrow without such change, till age has fixed the lines of the face, or till care has made them hard and unmalleable? But the effect on her was as nothing to that which grief, remorse, and desolation had made on him. He had had no child with him, no sister, no friend. Bozzle had been his only refuge,—a refuge not adapted to make life easier to such a man as Trevelyan; and he,—in spite of the accusations made by himself against his wife, within his own breast hourly since he had left her,—had found it to be very difficult to satisfy his own conscience. He told himself from hour to hour that he knew that he was right;—but in very truth he was ever doubting his own conduct.

"You have been ill, Louis," she said, looking at him.

"Ill at ease, Emily;—very ill at ease! A sore heart will make the face thin, as well as fever or ague. Since we parted I have not had much to comfort me."

"Nor have I,—nor any of us," said she. "How was comfort to come from such a parting?"

Then they both stood silent together. He was still holding her by the hand, but she was careful not to return his pressure. She would not take her hand away from him; but she would show him no sign of softness till he should have absolutely acquitted her of the accusation he had made against her. "We are man and wife," he said after awhile. "In spite of all that has come and gone I am yours, and you are mine."

"You should have remembered that always, Louis."

"I have never forgotten it,—never. In no thought have I been untrue to you. My heart has never changed since first I gave it you." There came a bitter frown upon her face, of which she was so conscious herself, that she turned her face away from him. She still remembered her lesson, that she was not to anger him, and, therefore, she refrained from answering him at all. But the answer was there, hot within her bosom. Had he loved her,—and yet suspected that she was false to him and to her vows, simply because she had been on terms of intimacy with an old friend? Had he loved her, and yet turned her from his house? Had he loved her,—and set a policeman to watch her? Had he loved her, and yet spoken evil of her to all their friends? Had he loved her, and yet striven to rob her of her child? "Will you come to me?" he said.

"I suppose it will be better so," she answered slowly.

"Then you will promise me——" He paused, and attempted to turn her towards him, so that he might look her in the face.

"Promise what?" she said, quickly glancing round at him, and drawing her hand away from him as she did so.

"That all intercourse with Colonel Osborne shall be at an end."

"I will make no promise. You come to me to add one insult to another. Had you been a man, you would not have named him to me after what you have done to me."

"That is absurd. I have a right to demand from you such a pledge. I am willing to believe that you have not——"

"Have not what?"

"That you have not utterly disgraced me."

"God in heaven, that I should hear this!" she exclaimed. "Louis Trevelyan, I have not disgraced you at all,—in thought, in word, in deed, in look, or in gesture. It is you that have disgraced yourself, and ruined me, and degraded even your own child."

"Is this the way in which you welcome me?"

"Certainly it is,—in this way and in no other if you speak to me of what is past, without acknowledging your error." Her brow became blacker and blacker as she continued to speak to him. "It would be best that nothing should be said,—not a word. That it all should be regarded as an ugly dream. But, when you come to me and at once go back to it all, and ask me for a promise——"

"Am I to understand then that all idea of submission to your husband is to be at an end?"

"I will submit to no imputation on my honour,—even from you. One would have thought that it would have been for you to preserve it untarnished."

"And you will give me no assurance as to your future life?"

"None;—certainly none. If you want promises from me, there can be no hope for the future. What am I to promise? That I will not have—a lover? What respect can I enjoy as your wife if such a promise be needed? If you should choose to fancy that it had been broken you would set your policeman to watch me again! Louis, we can never live together again ever with comfort, unless you acknowledge in your own heart that you have used me shamefully."

"Were you right to see him in Devonshire?"

"Of course I was right. Why should I not see him,—or any one?"

"And you will see him again?"

"When papa comes, of course I shall see him."

"Then it is hopeless," said he, turning away from her.

"If that man is to be a source of disquiet to you, it is hopeless," she answered. "If you cannot so school yourself that he shall be the same to you as other men, it is quite hopeless. You must still be mad,—as you have been mad hitherto."

He walked about the room restlessly for a time, while she stood with assumed composure near the window. "Send me my child," he said at last.

"He shall come to you, Louis,—for a little; but he is not to be taken out from hence. Is that a promise?"

"You are to exact promises from me, where my own rights are concerned, while you refuse to give me any, though I am entitled to demand them! I order you to send the boy to me. Is he not my own?"

"Is he not mine too? And is he not all that you have left to me?"

He paused again, and then gave the promise. "Let him be brought to me. He shall not be removed now. I intend to have him. I tell you so fairly. He shall be taken from you unless you come back to me with such assurances as to your future conduct as I have a right to demand. There is much that the law cannot give me. It cannot procure wife-like submission, love, gratitude, or even decent matronly conduct. But that which it can give me, I will have."

She walked off to the door, and then as she was quitting the room she spoke to him once again. "Alas, Louis," she said, "neither can the law, nor medicine, nor religion, restore to you that fine intellect which foolish suspicions have destroyed." Then she left him and returned to the room in which her aunt, and Nora, and the child were all clustered together, waiting to learn the effects of the interview. The two women asked their questions with their eyes, rather than with spoken words. "It is all over," said Mrs. Trevelyan. "There is nothing left for me but to go back to papa. I only hear the same accusations, repeated again and again, and make myself subject to the old insults." Then Mrs. Outhouse knew that she could interfere no ırther, and that in truth nothing could be done till ıe return of Sir Marmaduke should relieve her and ər husband from all further active concern in the atter.

But Trevelyan was still down-stairs waiting for the child. At last it was arranged that Nora should take the boy into the drawing-room, and that Mrs. Outhouse should fetch the father up from the parlour to the room above it. Angry as was Mrs. Trevelyan with her husband, not the less was she anxious to make the boy good-looking and seemly in his father's eyes. She washed the child's face, put on him a clean frill and a pretty ribbon; and, as she did so, she bade him kiss his papa, and speak nicely to him, and love him. "Poor papa is unhappy," she said, "and Louey must be very good to him." The boy, child though he was, understood much more of what was passing around him than his mother knew. How was he to love papa when mamma did not do so? In some shape that idea had framed itself in his mind; and, as he was taken down, he knew it was impossible that he should speak nicely to his papa. Nora did as she was bidden, and went down to the first-floor. Mrs. Outhouse, promising that even if she were put out of the room by Mr. Trevelyan she would not stir from the landing outside the door, descended to the parlour and quickly returned with the unfortunate father. Mr. Outhouse, in the meantime, was still sitting in his closet, tormented with curiosity, but yet determined not to be seen till the intruder should have left his house.

"I hope you are well, Nora," he said, as he entered the room with Mrs. Outhouse.

"Quite well, thank you, Louis."

"I am sorry that our troubles should have deprived you of the home you had been taught to expect." To this Nora made no reply, but escaped, and went up to

her sister. "My poor little boy," said Trevelyan, taking the child and placing it on his knee. "I suppose you have forgotten your unfortunate father." The child, of course, said nothing, but just allowed himself to be kissed.

"He is looking very well," said Mrs. Outhouse.

"Is he? I dare say he is well. Louey, my boy, are you happy?" The question was asked in a voice that was dismal beyond compare, and it also remained unanswered. He had been desired to speak nicely to his papa; but how was it possible that a child should speak nicely under such a load of melancholy? "He will not speak to me," said Trevelyan. "I suppose it is what I might have expected." Then the child was put off his knee on to the floor, and began to whimper, "A few months since he would sit there for hours, with his head upon my breast," said Trevelyan.

"A few months is a long time in the life of such an infant," said Mrs. Outhouse.

"He may go away," said Trevelyan. Then the child was led out of the room, and sent up to his mother.

"Emily has done all she can to make the child love your memory," said Mrs. Outhouse.

"To love my memory! What;—as though I were dead. I will teach him to love me as I am, Mrs. Outhouse. I do not think that it is too late. Will you tell your husband from me, with my compliments, that I shall cause him to be served with a legal demand for the restitution of my child?"

"But Sir Marmaduke will be here in a few days."

"I know nothing of that. Sir Marmaduke is nothing to me now. My child is my own,—and so is

my wife. Sir Marmaduke has no authority over either one or the other. I find my child here, and it is here that I must look for him. I am sorry that you should be troubled, but the fault does not rest with me. Mr. Outhouse has refused to give me up my own child, and I am driven to take such steps for his recovery as the law has put within my reach."

"Why did you turn your wife out of doors, Mr. Trevelyan?" asked Mrs. Outhouse boldly.

"I did not turn her out of doors. I provided a fitting shelter for her. I gave her everything that she could want. You know what happened. That man went down and was received there. I defy you, Mrs. Outhouse, to say that it was my fault."

Mrs. Outhouse did attempt to show him that it was his fault; but while she was doing so he left the house. "I don't think she could go back to him," said Mrs. Outhouse to her husband. "He is quite insane upon this matter."

"I shall be insane, I know," said Mr. Outhouse, "if Sir Marmaduke does not come home very quickly." Nevertheless he quite ignored any legal power that might be brought to bear against him as to the restitution of the child to its father.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Parker's Hotel, Mowbray Street.

WITHIN a week of the occurrence which is related in the last chapter, there came a telegram from Southampton to the parsonage at St. Diddulph's, saying that Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley had reached England. On the evening of that day they were to

lodge at a small family hotel in Baker Street, and both Mrs. Trevelyan and Nora were to be with them. The leave-taking at the parsonage was painful, as on both sides there existed a feeling that affection and sympathy were wanting. The uncle and aunt had done their duty, and both Mrs. Trevelyan and Nora felt that they ought to have been demonstrative and cordial in their gratitude;—but they found it impossible to become so. And the rector could not pretend but that he was glad to be rid of his guests. There were, too, some last words about money to be spoken, which were grievous thorns in the poor man's flesh. Two bank notes, however, were put upon his table, and he knew that unless he took them he could not pay for the provisions which his unwelcome visitors had consumed. Surely there never was a man so cruelly ill-used as had been Mr. Outhouse in all this matter. "Another such winter as that would put me in my grave," he said, when his wife tried to comfort him after they were gone. "I know that they have both been very good to us," said Mrs. Trevelyan, as she and her sister, together with the child and the nurse, hurried away towards Baker Street in a cab, "but I have never for a moment felt that they were glad to have us." "But how could they have been glad to have us," she added afterwards, "when we brought such trouble with us?" But they to whom they were going now would receive her with joy;—would make her welcome with all her load of sorrows, would give to her a sympathy which it was impossible that she should receive from others. Though she might not be happy now,—for in truth how could she be ever really happy again,—there would be a joy to her in placing her child in her mother's

arms, and in receiving her father's warm caresses. That her father would be very vehement in his anger against her husband she knew well,—for Sir Marmaduke was a vehement man. But there would be some support for her in the very violence of his wrath, and at this moment it was such support that she most needed. As they journeyed together in the cab, the married sister seemed to be in the higher spirits of the two. She was sure, at any rate, that those to whom she was going would place themselves on her side. Nora had her own story to tell about Hugh Stanbury, and was by no means so sure that her tale would be received with cordial agreement. "Let me tell them myself," she whispered to her sister. "Not to-night, because they will have so much to say to you; but I shall tell mamma to-morrow."

The train by which the Rowleys were to reach London was due at the station at 7.30 p.m., and the two sisters timed their despatch from St. Diddulph's so as to enable them to reach the hotel at eight. "We shall be there now before mamma," said Nora, "because they will have so much luggage, and so many things, and the trains are always late." When they started from the door of the parsonage, Mr. Outhouse gave the direction to the cabman, "Gregg's Hotel, Baker Street." Then at once he began to console himself in that they were gone.

It was a long drive from St. Diddulph's in the east, to Marylebone in the west, of London. None of the party in the cab knew anything of the region through which they passed. The cabman took the line by the back of the bank, and Finsbury Square and the City Road, thinking it best, probably, to avoid the crush at Holborn

Hill, though at the expense of something of a circuit. But of this Mrs. Trevelyan and Nora knew nothing. Had their way taken them along Piccadilly, or through Mayfair, or across Grosvenor Square, they would have known where they were; but at present they were not thinking of those once much-loved localities. The cab passed the Angel, and up and down the hill at Pentonville, and by the King's Cross stations, and through Euston Square,—and then it turned up Gower Street. Surely the man should have gone on along the New Road, now that he had come so far out of his way. But of this the two ladies knew nothing,—nor did the nurse. It was a dark, windy night, but the lamps in the streets had given them light, so that they had not noticed the night. Nor did they notice it now as the streets became narrower and darker. They were hardly thinking that their journey was yet at an end, and the mother was in the act of covering her boy's face as he lay asleep on the nurse's lap, when the cab was stopped. Nora looking out through the window, saw the word "Hotel" over a door-way, and was satisfied. "Shall I take the child, ma'am?" said a man in black, and the child was handed out. Nora was the first to follow, and she then perceived that the door of the hotel was not open. Mrs. Trevelyan followed; and then they looked round them,—and the child was gone. They heard the rattle of another cab as it was carried away at a gallop round a distant corner;—and then some inkling of what had happened came upon them. The father had succeeded in getting possession of his child.

It was a narrow, dark street, very quiet, having about it a certain air of poor respectability,—an obscure, noiseless street, without even a sign of life. Some

unfortunate one had endeavoured here to keep an hotel; —but there was no hotel kept there now. There had been much craft in selecting the place in which the child had been taken from them. As they looked around them, perceiving the terrible misfortune which had befallen them, there was not a human being near them save the cabman, who was occupied in unchaining, or pretending to unchain the heavy mass of luggage on the roof. The windows of the house before which they were stopping, were closed, and Nora perceived at once that the hotel was not inhabited. The cabman must have perceived it also. As for the man who had taken the child, the nurse could only say that he was dressed in black, like a waiter, that he had a napkin under his arm, and no hat on his head. He had taken the boy tenderly in his arms,—and then she had seen nothing further. The first thing that Nora had seen, as she stood on the pavement, was the other cab moving off rapidly.

Mrs. Trevelyan had staggered against the railings, and was soon screaming in her wretchedness. Before long there was a small crowd around them, comprising three or four women, a few boys, an old man or two, —and a policeman. To the policeman Nora had soon told the whole story, and the cabman was of course attacked. But the cabman played his part very well. He declared that he had done just what he had been told to do. Nora was indeed sure that she had heard her uncle desire him to drive to Gregg's Hotel in Baker Street. The cabman in answer to this, declared that he had not clearly heard the old gentleman's directions; but that a man whom he had conceived to be a servant, had very plainly told him to drive to Parker's Hotel,

Mowbray Street, Gower Street. "I comed ever so far out of my way," said the cabman, "to avoid the rumpus with the homnibuses at the hill,—cause the ladies' things is so heavy we'd never got up if the 'orse had once jibbed." All which, though it had nothing to do with the matter, seemed to impress the policeman with the idea that the cabman, if not a true man, was going to be too clever for them on this occasion. And the crafty cabman went on to declare that his horse was so tired with the load that he could not go on to Baker Street. They must get another cab. Take his number! Of course they could take his number. There was his number. His fare was four and six,—that is if the ladies wouldn't pay him anything extra for the terrible load; and he meant to have it. It would be sixpence more if they kept him there many minutes longer. The number was taken, and another cab was got, and the luggage was transferred, and the money was paid, while the unhappy mother was still screaming in hysterics against the railings. What had been done was soon clear enough to all those around her. Nora had told the policeman, and had told one of the women, thinking to obtain their sympathy and assistance. "It's the kid's dada as has taken it," said one man, "and there ain't nothing to be done." There was nothing to be done;—nothing at any rate then and there.

Nora had been very eager that the cabman should be arrested; but the policeman assured her that such an arrest was out of the question, and would have been useless had it been possible. The man would be forthcoming if his presence should be again desired, but he had probably,—so said the policeman,—really been desired to drive to Mowbray Street. "They knows

where to find me if they wants me,—only I must be paid my time," said the cabman confidently. And the policeman was of opinion that as the boy had been kidnapped on behalf of the father, no legal steps could be taken either for the recovery of the child or for the punishment of the perpetrators of the act. He got up, however, on the box of the cab, and accompanied the party to the hotel in Baker Street. They reached it almost exactly at the same time with Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley, and the reader must imagine the confusion, the anguish, and the disappointment of that meeting. Mrs. Trevelyan was hardly in possession of her senses when she reached her mother, and could not be induced to be tranquil even when she was assured by her father that her son would suffer no immediate evil by being transferred to his father's hands. She in her frenzy declared that she would never see her little one again, and seemed to think that the father might not improbably destroy the child. "He is mad, papa, and does not know what he does. Do you mean to say that a madman may do as he pleases?—that he may rob my child from me in the streets?—that he may take him out of my very arms in that way?" And she was almost angry with her father because no attempt was made that night to recover the boy.

Sir Marmaduke, who was not himself a good lawyer, had been closeted with the policeman for a quarter of an hour, and had learned the policeman's views. Of course, the father of the child was the person who had done the deed. Whether the cabman had been in the plot or not, was not matter of much consequence. There could be no doubt that some one had told the man to go to Parker's Hotel, as the cab was starting; and it

would probably be impossible to punish him in the teeth of such instructions. Sir Marmaduke, however, could doubtless have the cabman summoned. And as for the absolute abduction of the child, the policeman was of opinion that a father could not be punished for obtaining possession of his son by such a stratagem, unless the custody of the child had been made over to the mother by some court of law. The policeman, indeed, seemed to think that nothing could be done, and Sir Marmaduke was inclined to agree with him. When this was explained to Mrs. Trevelyan by her mother, she again became hysterical in her agony, and could hardly be restrained from going forth herself to look for her lost treasure.

It need hardly be further explained that Trevelyan had planned the stratagem in concert with Mr. Bozzle. Bozzle, though strongly cautioned by his wife to keep himself out of danger in the matter, was sorely tempted by his employer's offer of a hundred pounds. He positively refused to be a party to any attempt at violence at St. Diddulph's; but when he learned, as he did learn, that Mrs. Trevelyan, with her sister and baby, were to be transferred from St. Diddulph's in a cab to Baker Street, and that the journey was luckily to be made during the shades of evening, his active mind went to work, and he arranged the plan. There were many difficulties, and even some pecuniary difficulty. He bargained that he should have his hundred pounds clear of all deduction for expenses,—and then the attendant expenses were not insignificant. It was necessary that there should be four men in the service, all good and true; and men require to be well paid for such goodness and truth. There was the man, himself

an ex-policeman, who gave the instructions to the first cabman, as he was starting. The cabman would not undertake the job at all unless he were so instructed on the spot, asserting that in this way he would be able to prove that the orders he obeyed came from the lady's husband. And there was the crafty pseudo-waiter, with the napkin and no hat, who had carried the boy to the cab in which his father was sitting. And there were the two cabmen. Bozzle planned it all, and with some difficulty arranged the preliminaries. How successful was the scheme, we have seen; and Bozzle, for a month, was able to assume a superiority over his wife, which that honest woman found to be very disagreeable. "There ain't no fraudulent abduction in it at all," Bozzle exclaimed, "because a wife ain't got no rights again her husband,—not in such a matter as that." Mrs. Bozzle implied that if her husband were to take her child away from her without her leave, she'd let him know something about it. But as the husband had in his possession the note for a hundred pounds, realized, Mrs. Bozzle had not much to say in support of her view of the case.

On the morning after the occurrence, while Sir Marmaduke was waiting with his solicitor upon a magistrate to find whether anything could be done, the following letter was brought to Mrs. Trevelyan at Gregg's Hotel:—

"Our child is safe with me, and will remain so. If you care to obtain legal advice you will find that I as his father have a right to keep him under my protection. I shall do so; but will allow you to see him

as soon as I shall have received a full guarantee that you have no idea of withdrawing him from my charge.

"A home for yourself with me is still open to you,—on condition that you will give me the promise that I have demanded from you; and as long as I shall not hear that you again see or communicate with the person to whose acquaintance I object. While you remain away from me I will cause you to be paid £50 a month, as I do not wish that you should be a burden on others. But this payment will depend also on your not seeing or holding any communication with the person to whom I have alluded.

"Your affectionate and offended husband,

"LOUIS TREVELYAN.

"A letter addressed to The Acrobats' Club will reach me."

Sir Rowley came home dispirited and unhappy, and could not give much comfort to his daughter. The magistrate had told him that though the cabman might probably be punished for taking the ladies otherwise than as directed,—if the direction to Baker Street could be proved,—nothing could be done to punish the father. The magistrate explained that under a certain Act of Parliament the mother might apply to the Court of Chancery for the custody of any children under seven years of age, and that the court would probably grant such custody,—unless it were shewn that the wife had left her husband without sufficient cause. The magistrate could not undertake to say whether or no sufficient cause had here been given;—or whether the husband was in fault or the wife. It was, however,

clear that nothing could be done without application to the Court of Chancery. It appeared,—so said the magistrate,—that the husband had offered a home to his wife, and that in offering it he had attempted to impose no conditions which could be shewn to be cruel before a judge. The magistrate thought that Mr. Trevelyan had done nothing illegal in taking the child from the cab. Sir Marmaduke, on hearing this, was of opinion that nothing could be gained by legal interference. His private desire was to get hold of Trevelyan and pull him limb from limb. Lady Rowley thought that her daughter had better go back to her husband, let the future consequences be what they might. And the poor desolate mother herself had almost brought herself to offer to do so, having in her brain some idea that she would after a while be able to escape with her boy. As for love for her husband, certainly there was none now left in her bosom. Nor could she teach herself to think it possible that she should ever live with him again on friendly terms. But she would submit to anything with the object of getting back her boy. Three or four letters were written to Mr. Trevelyan in as many days from his wife, from Lady Rowley, and from Nora; in which various overtures were made. Trevelyan wrote once again to his wife. She knew, he said, already the terms on which she might come back. These terms were still open to her. As for the boy, he certainly should not leave his father. A meeting might be planned on condition that he, Trevelyan, were provided with a written assurance from his wife that she would not endeavour to remove the boy, and that he himself should be present at the meeting.

Thus the first week was passed after Sir Marmaduke's

return,—and a most wretched time it was for all the party at Gregg's Hotel.

CHAPTER XXX.

Lady Rowley makes an Attempt.

NOTHING could be more uncomfortable than the state of Sir Marmaduke Rowley's family for the first ten days after the arrival in London of the Governor of the Mandarin Islands. Lady Rowley had brought with her two of her girls,—the third and fourth,—and, as we know, had been joined by the two eldest, so that there was a large family of ladies gathered together. A house had been taken in Manchester Street, to which they had intended to transfer themselves after a single night passed at Gregg's Hotel. But the trouble and sorrow inflicted upon them by the abduction of Mrs. Trevelyan's child, and the consequent labours thrust upon Sir Marmaduke's shoulders had been so heavy, that they had slept six nights at the hotel, before they were able to move themselves into the house prepared for them. By that time all idea had been abandoned of recovering the child by any legal means to be taken as a consequence of the illegality of the abduction. The boy was with his father, and the lawyers seemed to think that the father's rights were paramount,—as he had offered a home to his wife without any conditions which a court of law would adjudge to be cruel. If she could shew that he had driven her to live apart from him by his own bad conduct, then probably the custody of her boy might be awarded to her, until the child should be seven years old. But when the circumstances of the case were explained to Sir Marma-

duke's lawyer by Lady Rowley, that gentleman shook his head. Mrs. Trevelyan had, he said, no case with which she could go into court. Then by degrees there were words whispered as to the husband's madness. The lawyer said that that was a matter for the doctors. If a certain amount of medical evidence could be obtained to show that the husband was in truth mad, the wife could, no doubt, obtain the custody of the child. When this was reported to Mrs. Trevelyan, she declared that conduct such as her husband's must suffice to prove any man to be mad; but at this Sir Marmaduke shook his head, and Lady Rowley sat, sadly silent, with her daughter's hand within her own. They would not dare to tell her that she could regain her child by that plea.

During those ten days they did not learn whither the boy had been carried, nor did they know even where the father might be found. Sir Marmaduke followed up the address as given in the letter, and learned from the porter at "The Acrobats" that the gentleman's letters were sent to No. 55, Stony Walk, Union Street, Borough. To this uncomfortable locality Sir Marmaduke travelled more than once. Thrice he went thither, intent on finding his son-in-law's residence. On the two first occasions he saw no one but Mrs. Bozzle; and the discretion of that lady in declining to give any information was most admirable. "Trewillian!" Yes, she had heard the name certainly. It might be that her husband had business engagements with a gent of that name. She would not say even that for certain, as it was not her custom ever to make any inquiries as to her husband's business engagements. Her husband's business engagements were, she said, much

too important for the "likes of she" to know anything about them. When was Bozzle likely to be at home? Bozzle was never likely to be at home. According to her showing, Bozzle was of all husbands the most erratic. He might perhaps come in for an hour or two in the middle of the day on a Wednesday, or perhaps would take a cup of tea at home on Friday evening. But anything so fitful and uncertain as were Bozzle's appearances in the bosom of his family was not to be conceived in the mind of woman. Sir Marmaduke then called in the middle of the day on Wednesday, but Bozzle was reported to be away in the provinces. His wife had no idea in which of the provinces he was at that moment engaged. The persevering governor from the islands called again on the Friday evening, and then, by chance, Bozzle was found at home. But Sir Marmaduke succeeded in gaining very little information even from Bozzle. The man acknowledged that he was employed by Mr. Trevelyan. Any letter or parcel left with him for Mr. Trevelyan should be duly sent to that gentleman. If Sir Marmaduke wanted Mr. Trevelyan's address, he could write to Mr. Trevelyan and ask for it. If Mr. Trevelyan declined to give it, was it likely that he, Bozzle, should betray it? Sir Marmaduke explained who he was at some length. Bozzle with a smile assured the governor that he knew very well who he was. He let drop a few words to show that he was intimately acquainted with the whole course of Sir Marmaduke's family affairs. He knew all about the Mandarins, and Colonel Osborne, and Gregg's Hotel,—not that he said anything about Parker's Hotel,—and the Colonial Office. He spoke of Miss Nora, and even knew the names of the other two young

ladies, Miss Sophia and Miss Lucy. It was a weakness with Bozzle,—that of displaying his information. He would have much liked to be able to startle Sir Marmaduke by describing the Government House in the island, or by telling him something of his old carriage-horses. But of such information as Sir Marmaduke desired, Sir Marmaduke got none.

And there were other troubles which fell very heavily upon the poor governor, who had come home as it were for a holiday, and who was a man hating work naturally, and who, from the circumstances of his life, had never been called on to do much work. A man may govern the Mandarins and yet live in comparative idleness. To do such governing work well a man should have a good presence, a flow of words which should mean nothing, an excellent temper, and a love of hospitality. With these attributes Sir Rowley was endowed; for, though his disposition was by nature hot, for governing purposes it had been brought by practice under good control. He had now been summoned home through the machinations of his dangerous old friend Colonel Osborne, in order that he might give the results of his experience in governing before a committee of the House of Commons. In coming to England on this business he had thought much more of his holiday, of his wife and children, of his daughters at home, of his allowance per day while he was to be away from his government, and of his salary to be paid to him entire during his absence, instead of being halved as it would be if he were away on leave,—he had thought much more in coming home on these easy and pleasant matters, than he did on the work that was to be required from him when he arrived. And then it

came to pass that he felt himself almost injured, when the Colonial Office demanded his presence from day to day, and when clerks bothered him with questions as to which they expected ready replies, but in replying to which Sir Marmaduke was by no means ready. The working men at the Colonial Office had not quite thought that Sir Marmaduke was the most fitting man for the job in hand. There was a certain Mr. Thomas Smith at another set of islands in quite another part of the world, who was supposed by these working men at home to be a very paragon of a governor. If he had been had home,—so said the working men,—no Committee of the House would have been able to make anything of him. They might have asked him questions week after week, and he would have answered them all fluently and would have committed nobody. He knew all the ins and outs of governing,—did Mr. Thomas Smith,—and was a match for the sharpest Committee that ever sat at Westminster. Poor Sir Marmaduke was a man of a very different sort; all of which was known by the working men; but the Parliamentary interest had been too strong, and here was Sir Marmaduke at home. But the working men were not disposed to make matters so pleasant for Sir Marmaduke, as Sir Marmaduke had expected. The Committee would not examine Sir Marmaduke till after Easter, in the middle of April; but it was expected of him that he should read blue-books without number, and he was so catechised by the working men that he almost began to wish himself back at the Mandarins. In this way the new establishment in Manchester Street was not at first in a happy or even in a contented condition.

At last, after about ten days, Lady Rowley did

succeed in obtaining an interview with Trevelyan. A meeting was arranged through Bozzle, and took place in a very dark and gloomy room at an inn in the City. Why Bozzle should have selected the Bremen Coffee House, in Poulter's Alley, for this meeting no fit reason can surely be given, unless it was that he conceived himself bound to select the most dreary locality within his knowledge on so melancholy an occasion. Poulter's Alley is a narrow dark passage somewhere behind the Mansion House; and the Bremen Coffee House,—why so called no one can now tell,—is one of those strange houses of public resort in the City at which the guests seem never to eat, never to drink, never to sleep, but to come in and out after a mysterious and almost ghostly fashion, seeing their friends,—or perhaps their enemies, in nooks and corners, and carrying on their conferences in low melancholy whispers. There is an aged waiter at the Bremen Coffee House; and there is certainly one private sitting-room up-stairs. It was a dingy, ill-furnished room, with an old large mahogany table, an old horse-hair sofa, six horse-hair chairs, two old round mirrors, and an old mahogany press in a corner. It was a chamber so sad in its appearance that no wholesome useful work could have been done within it; nor could men have eaten there with any appetite, or have drained the flowing bowl with any touch of joviality. It was generally used for such purposes as that to which it was now appropriated, and no doubt had been taken by Bozzle on more than one previous occasion. Here Lady Rowley arrived precisely at the hour fixed, and was told that the gentleman was waiting up-stairs for her.

There had, of course, been many family consultations as to the manner in which this meeting should be arranged. Should Sir Marmaduke accompany his wife;—or, perhaps, should Sir Marmaduke go alone? Lady Rowley had been very much in favour of meeting Mr. Trevelyan without any one to assist her in the conference. As for Sir Marmaduke, no meeting could be concleded between him and his son-in-law without a personal, and probably a violent quarrel. Of that Lady Rowley had been quite sure. Sir Marmaduke, since he had been home, had, in the midst of his various troubles, been driven into so vehement a state of indignation against his son-in-law as to be unable to speak of the wretched man without strongest terms of opprobrium. Nothing was too bad to be said by him of one who had ill-treated his dearest daughter. It must be admitted that Sir Marmaduke had heard only one side of the question. He had questioned his daughter, and had constantly seen his old friend Osborne. The colonel's journey down to Devonshire had been made to appear the most natural proceeding in the world. The correspondence of which Trevelyan thought so much had been shown to consist of such notes as might pass between any old gentleman and any young woman. The promise which Trevelyan had endeavoured to exact, and which Mrs. Trevelyan had declined to give, appeared to the angry father to be a monstrous insult. He knew that the colonel was an older man than himself, and his Emily was still to him only a young girl. It was incredible to him that anybody should have regarded his old comrade as his daughter's lover. He did not believe that anybody had, in truth, so regarded the man. The tale had

been a monstrous invention on the part of the husband, got up because he had become tired of his young wife. According to Sir Marmaduke's way of thinking, Trevelyan should either be thrashed within an inch of his life, or else locked up in a mad-house. Colonel Osborne shook his head, and expressed a conviction that the poor man was mad.

But Lady Rowley was more hopeful. Though she was as confident about her daughter as was the father, she was less confident about the old friend. She, probably, was alive to the fact that a man of fifty might put on the airs and assume the character of a young lover; and acting on that suspicion, entertaining also some hope that bad as matters now were they might be mended, she had taken care that Colonel Osborne and Mrs. Trevelyan should not be brought together. Sir Marmaduke had fumed, but Lady Rowley had been firm. "If you think so, mamma," Mrs. Trevelyan had said, with something of scorn in her tone,—"of course let it be so." Lady Rowley had said that it would be better so; and the two had not seen each other since the memorable visit to Nuncombe Putney. And now Lady Rowley was about to meet her son-in-law with some slight hope that she might arrange affairs. She was quite aware that present indignation, though certainly a gratification, might be indulged in at much too great a cost. It would be better for all reasons that Emily should go back to her husband and her home, and that Trevelyan should be forgiven for his iniquities.

Bozzle was at the tavern during the interview, but he was not seen by Lady Rowley. He remained seated down-stairs, in one of the dingy corners, ready to give

assistance to his patron should assistance be needed. When Lady Rowley was shown into the gloomy sitting-room by the old waiter, she found Trevelyan alone, standing in the middle of the room, and waiting for her. "This is a sad occasion," he said, as he advanced to give her his hand.

"A very sad occasion, Louis."

"I do not know what you may have heard of what has occurred, Lady Rowley. It is natural, however, to suppose that you must have heard me spoken of with censure."

"I think my child has been ill used, Louis," she replied.

"Of course you do. I could not expect that it should be otherwise. When it was arranged that I should meet you here, I was quite aware that you would have taken the side against me before you had heard my story. It is I that have been ill used,—cruelly misused; but I do not expect that you should believe me. I do not wish you to do. I would not for worlds separate the mother from her daughter."

"But why have you separated your own wife from her child?"

"Because it was my duty. What! Is a father not to have the charge of his own son. I have done nothing, Lady Rowley, to justify a separation which is contrary to the laws of nature."

"Where is the boy, Louis?"

"Ah;—that is just what I am not prepared to tell any one who has taken my wife's side till I know that my wife has consented to pay to me that obedience which I, as her husband, have a right to demand. If Emily will do as I request of her,—as I command

her,"—as Trevelyan said this, he spoke in a tone which was intended to give the highest possible idea of his own authority and dignity,—"then she may see her child without delay."

"What is it you request of my daughter?"

"Obedience;—simply that. Submission to my will, which is surely a wife's duty. Let her beg my pardon for what has occurred,—"

"She cannot do that, Louis."

"And solemnly promise me," continued Trevelyan, not deigning to notice Lady Rowley's interruption, "that she will hold no further intercourse with that snake in the grass who wormed his way into my house, —let her be humble, and penitent, and affectionate, and then she shall be restored to her husband and to her child." He said this walking up and down the room, and waving his hand, as though he were making a speech that was intended to be eloquent,—as though he had conceived that he was to overcome his mother-in-law by the weight of his words and the magnificence of his demeanour. And yet his demeanour was ridiculous, and his words would have had no weight had they not tended to show Lady Rowley how little prospect there was that she should be able to heal this breach. He himself, too, was so altered in appearance since she had last seen him, bright with the hopes of his young married happiness, that she would hardly have recognised him had she met him in the street. He was thin, and pale, and haggard, and mean. And as he stalked up and down the room, it seemed to her that the very character of the man was changed. She had not previously known him to be pompous, unreasonable, and absurd. She did not answer him at once, as

she perceived that he had not finished his address;—and, after a moment's pause, he continued. "Lady Rowley, there is nothing I would not have done for your daughter,—for my wife. All that I had was hers. I did not dictate to her any mode of life; I required from her no sacrifices; I subjected her to no caprices; but I was determined to be master in my own house."

"I do not think, Louis, that she has ever denied your right to be master."

"To be master in my own house, and to be paramount in my influence over her. So much I had a right to demand."

"Who has denied your right?"

"She has submitted herself to the counsels and to the influences of a man who has endeavoured to undermine me in her affection. In saying that I make my accusation as light against her as is possible. I might make it much heavier, and yet not sin against the truth."

"This is an illusion, Louis."

"Ah;—well. No doubt it becomes you to defend your child. Was it an illusion when he went to Devonshire? Was it an illusion when he corresponded with her,—contrary to my express orders,—both before and after that unhallowed journey? Lady Rowley, there must be no more such illusions. If my wife means to come back to me, and to have her child in her own hands, she must be penitent as regards the past, and obedient as regards the future."

There was a wicked bitterness in that word penitent which almost maddened Lady Rowley. She had come to this meeting believing that Trevelyan would

be rejoiced to take back his wife, if details could be arranged for his doing so which should not subject him to the necessity of crying, peccavi; but she found him speaking of his wife as though he would be doing her the greatest possible favour in allowing her to come back to him dressed in sackcloth, and with ashes on her head. She could understand from what she had heard that his tone and manner were much changed since he obtained possession of the child, and that he now conceived that he had his wife within his power. That he should become a tyrant because he had the power to tyrannise was not in accordance with her former conception of the man's character;—but then he was so changed, that she felt that she knew nothing of the man who now stood before her. "I cannot acknowledge that my daughter has done anything that requires penitence," said Lady Rowley.

"I dare say not;—but my view is different."

"She cannot admit herself to be wrong when she knows herself to be right. You would not have her confess to a fault, the very idea of which has always been abhorrent to her?"

"She must be crushed in spirit, Lady Rowley, before she can again become a pure and happy woman."

"This is more than I can bear," said Lady Rowley, now, at last, worked up to a fever of indignation. "My daughter, sir, is as pure a woman as you have ever known, or are likely to know. You, who should have protected her against the world, will some day take blame to yourself as you remember that you have so cruelly maligned her." Then she walked away to the door, and would not listen to the words which he was hurling after her. She went down the stairs, and

out of the house, and at the end of Poulter's Alley found the cab which was waiting for her.

Trevelyan, as soon as he was alone, rang the bell, and sent for Bozzle. And while the waiter was coming to him, and until his myrmidon had appeared, he continued to stalk up and down the room, waving his hand in the air as though he were continuing his speech. "Bozzle," said he, as soon as the man had closed the door, "I have changed my mind."

"As how, Mr. Trewillian?"

"I shall make no further attempt. I have done all that man can do, and have done it in vain. Her father and mother uphold her in her conduct, and she is lost to me,—for ever."

"But the boy, Mr. T.?"

"I have my child. Yes,—I have my child. Poor infant. Bozzle, I look to you to see that none of them learn our retreat."

"As for that, Mr. Trewillian,—why facts is to be come at by one party pretty well as much as by another. Now, suppose the things was changed, wicey warsey,—and as I was hacting for the Colonel's party."

"D—— the Colonel!" exclaimed Trevelyan.

"Just so, Mr. Trewillian; but if I was hacting for the other party, and they said to me, 'Bozzle,—where's the boy?' why, in three days I'd be down on the facts. Facts is open, Mr. Trewillian, if you knows where to look for them."

"I shall take him abroad,—at once."

"Think twice of it, Mr. T. The boy is so young, you see, and a mother's 'art is softer and lovinger than anything. I'd think twice of it, Mr. T., before I kept

'em apart." This was a line of thought which Mr. Bozzle's conscience had not forced him to entertain to the prejudice of his professional arrangements; but now, as he conversed with his employer, and became by degrees aware of the failure of Trevelyan's mind, some shade of remorse came upon him, and made him say a word on behalf of the "other party."

"Am I not always thinking of it? What else have they left me to think of? That will do for to-day. You had better come down to me to-morrow afternoon." Bozzle promised obedience to these instructions, and as soon as his patron had started he paid the bill, and took himself home.

Lady Rowley, as she travelled back to her house in Manchester Street, almost made up her mind that the separation between her daughter and her son-in-law had better be continued. It was a very sad conclusion to which to come, but she could not believe that any high-spirited woman could long continue to submit herself to the caprices of a man so unreasonable and dictatorial as he to whom she had just been listening. Were it not for the boy, there would, she felt, be no doubt upon the matter. And now, as matters stood, she thought that it should be their great object to regain possession of the child. Then she endeavoured to calculate what would be the result to her daughter, if in very truth it should be found that the wretched man was mad. To hope for such a result seemed to her to be very wicked;—and yet she hardly knew how not to hope for it.

"Well, mamma," said Emily Trevelyan, with a faint attempt at a smile, "you saw him?"

"Yes, dearest, I saw him. I can only say that he is a most unreasonable man."

"And he would tell you nothing of Louey?"

"No dear,—not a word."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Sir Marmaduke at Home.

Nora Rowley had told her lover that there was to be no further communication between them till her father and mother should be in England; but in telling him so, had so frankly confessed her own affection for him and had so sturdily promised to be true to him, that no lover could have been reasonably aggrieved by such an interdiction. Nora was quite conscious of this, and was aware that Hugh Stanbury had received such encouragement as ought at any rate to bring him to the new Rowley establishment, as soon as he should learn where it had fixed itself. But when at the end of ten days he had not shown himself, she began to feel doubts. Could it be that he had changed his mind, that he was unwilling to encounter refusal from her father, or that he had found, on looking into his own affairs more closely, that it would be absurd for him to propose to take a wife to himself while his means were so poor and so precarious? Sir Marmaduke during this time had been so unhappy, so fretful, so indignant, and so much worried, that Nora herself had become almost afraid of him; and, without much reasoning on the matter, had taught herself to believe that Hugh might be actuated by similar fears. She had intended to tell her mother of what had occurred be-

tween her and Stanbury the first moment that she and Lady Rowley were together; but then there had fallen upon them that terrible incident of the loss of the child, and the whole family had become at once so wrapped up in the agony of the bereaved mother, and so full of rage against the unreasonable father, that there seemed to Nora to be no possible opportunity for the telling of her own love-story. Emily herself appeared to have forgotten it in the midst of her own misery, and had not mentioned Hugh Stanbury's name since they had been in Manchester Street. We have all felt how on occasions our own hopes and fears, nay, almost our own individuality, become absorbed in and obliterated by the more pressing cares and louder voices of those around us. Nora hardly dared to allude to herself while her sister's grief was still so prominent, and while her father was daily complaining of his own personal annoyances at the Colonial Office. It seemed to her that at such a moment she could not introduce a new matter for dispute, and perhaps a new subject of dismay.

Nevertheless, as the days passed by, and as she saw nothing of Hugh Stanbury, her heart became sore and her spirit vexed. It seemed to her that if she were now deserted by him, all the world would be over for her. The Glascock episode in her life had passed by,—that episode which might have been her history, which might have been a history so prosperous, so magnificent, and probably so happy. As she thought of herself and of circumstances as they had happened to her, of the resolutions which she had made as to her own career when she first came to London, and of the way in which she had thrown all those resolutions

away in spite of the wonderful success which had come in her path, she could not refrain from thinking that she had brought herself to shipwreck by her own indecision. It must not be imagined that she regretted what she had done. She knew very well that to have acted otherwise than she did when Mr. Glascock came to her at Nuncombe Putney would have proved her to be heartless, selfish, and unwomanly. Long before that time she had determined that it was her duty to marry a rich man,—and, if possible, a man in high position. Such a one had come to her,—one endowed with all the good things of the world beyond her most sanguine expectation,—and she had rejected him! She knew that she had been right because she had allowed herself to love the other man. She did not repent what she had done, the circumstances being as they were, but she almost regretted that she had been so soft in heart, so susceptible of the weakness of love, so little able to do as she pleased with herself. Of what use to her was it that she loved this man with all her strength of affection when he never came to her, although the time at which he had been told that he might come was now ten days past?

She was sitting one afternoon in the drawing-room listlessly reading, or pretending to read, a novel, when, on a sudden, Hugh Stanbury was announced. The circumstances of the moment were most unfortunate for such a visit. Sir Marmaduke, who had been down at Whitehall in the morning, and from thence had made a journey to St. Diddulph's-in-the-East and back, was exceedingly cross and out of temper. They had told him at his office that they feared he would not suffice to carry through the purpose for which he had been

brought home. And his brother-in-law, the parson, had expressed to him an opinion that he was in great part responsible for the misfortune of his daughter, by the encouragement which he had given to such a man as Colonel Osborne. Sir Marmaduke had in consequence quarrelled both with the chief clerk and with Mr. Outhouse, and had come home surly and discontented. Lady Rowley and her eldest daughter were away, closeted at the moment with Lady Milborough, with whom they were endeavouring to arrange some plan by which the boy might at any rate be given back. Poor Emily Trevelyan was humble enough now to Lady Milborough,—was prepared to be humble to any one, and in any circumstances, so that she should not be required to acknowledge that she had entertained Colonel Osborne as her lover. The two younger girls, Sophy and Lucy, were in the room when Stanbury was announced, as were also Sir Marmaduke, who at that very moment was uttering angry growls at the obstinacy and want of reason with which he had been treated by Mr. Outhouse. Now Sir Marmaduke had not so much as heard the name of Hugh Stanbury as yet; and Nora, though her listlessness was all at an end, at once felt how impossible it would be to explain any of the circumstances of her case in such an interview as this. While, however, Hugh's dear steps were heard upon the stairs, her feminine mind at once went to work to ascertain in what best mode, with what most attractive reason for his presence, she might introduce the young man to her father. Had not the girls been then present, she thought that it might have been expedient to leave Hugh to tell his own story to Sir Marmaduke. But she had no opportunity of send-

ing her sisters away; and, unless chance should remove them, this could not be done.

"He is son of the lady we were with at Nuncombe Putney," she whispered to her father as she got up to move across the room to welcome her lover. Now Sir Marmaduke had expressed great disapproval of that retreat to Dartmoor, and had only understood respecting it that it had been arranged between Trevelyan and the family in whose custody his two daughters had been sent away into banishment. He was not therefore specially disposed to welcome Hugh Stanbury in consequence of this mode of introduction.

Hugh, who had asked for Lady Rowley and Mrs. Trevelyan and had learned that they were out before he had mentioned Miss Rowley's name, was almost prepared to take his sweetheart into his arms. In that half-minute he had taught himself to expect that he would meet her alone, and had altogether forgotten Sir Marmaduke. Young men when they call at four o'clock in the day never expect to find papas at home. And of Sophia and Lucy he had either heard nothing or had forgotten what he had heard. He repressed himself however in time, and did not commit either Nora or himself by any very vehement demonstration of affection. But he did hold her hand longer than he should have done, and Sir Marmaduke saw that he did so.

"This is papa," said Nora. "Papa, this is our friend, Mr. Hugh Stanbury." The introduction was made in a manner almost absurdly formal, but poor Nora's difficulties lay heavy upon her. Sir Marmaduke muttered something;—but it was little more than a grunt. "Mamma and Emily are out," continued Nora.

"I dare say they will be in soon." Sir Marmaduke looked round sharply at the man. Why was he to be encouraged to stay till Lady Rowley should return? Lady Rowley did not want to see him. It seemed to Sir Marmaduke, in the midst of his troubles, that this was no time to be making new acquaintances. "These are my sisters, Mr. Stanbury," continued Nora. "This is Sophia, and this is Lucy." Sophia and Lucy would have been thoroughly willing to receive their sister's lover with genial kindness if they had been properly instructed, and if the time had been opportune; but, as it was, they had nothing to say. They, also, could only mutter some little sound intended to be more courteous than their father's grunt. Poor Nora!

"I hope you are comfortable here," said Hugh.

"The house is all very well," said Nora, "but we don't like the neighbourhood."

Hugh also felt that conversation was difficult. He had soon come to perceive,—before he had been in the room half a minute,—that the atmosphere was not favourable to his mission. There was to be no embracing or permission for embracing on the present occasion. Had he been left alone with Sir Marmaduke he would probably have told his business plainly, let Sir Marmaduke's manner to him have been what it might; but it was impossible for him to do this with three young ladies in the room with him. Seeing that Nora was embarrassed by her difficulties, and that Nora's father was cross and silent, he endeavoured to talk to the other girls, and asked them concerning their journey and the ship in which they had come. But it was very up-hill work. Lucy and Sophy could talk as glibly as any young ladies home from any

colony,—and no higher degree of fluency can be expressed;—but now they were cowed. Their elder sister was shamefully and most undeservedly disgraced, and this man had had something,—they knew not what,—to do with it. "Is Priscilla quite well?" Nora asked at last.

"Quite well. I heard from her yesterday. You know they have left the Clock House."

"I had not heard it."

"Oh yes;—and they are living in a small cottage just outside the village. And what else do you think has happened?"

"Nothing bad, I hope, Mr. Stanbury."

"My sister Dorothy has left her aunt, and is living with them again at Nuncombe."

"Has there been a quarrel, Mr. Stanbury?"

"Well, yes;—after a fashion there has, I suppose. But it is a long story and would not interest Sir Marmaduke. The wonder is that Dorothy should have been able to stay so long with my aunt. I will tell it you all some day." Sir Marmaduke could not understand why a long story about this man's aunt and sister should be told to his daughter. He forgot,—as men always do in such circumstances forget,—that, while he was living in the Mandarins, his daughter, living in England, would of course pick up new interest and become intimate with new histories. But he did not forget that pressure of the hand which he had seen, and he determined that his daughter Nora could not have any worse lover than the friend of his elder daughter's husband.

Stanbury had just determined that he must go, that there was no possibility for him either to say or do

anything to promote his cause at the present moment, when the circumstances were all changed by the return home of Lady Rowley and Mrs. Trevelyan. Lady Rowley knew, and had for some days known, much more of Stanbury than had come to the ears of Sir Marmaduke. She understood in the first place that the Stanburys had been very good to her daughter, and she was aware that Hugh Stanbury had thoroughly taken her daughter's part against his old friend Trevelyan. She would therefore have been prepared to receive him kindly had he not on this very morning been the subject of special conversation between her and Emily. But, as it had happened, Mrs. Trevelyan had this very day told Lady Rowley the whole story of Nora's love. The elder sister had not intended to be treacherous to the younger; but in the thorough confidence which mutual grief and close conference had created between the mother and daughter, everything had at last come out, and Lady Rowley had learned the story, not only of Hugh Stanbury's courtship, but of those rich offers which had been made by the heir to the barony of Peterborough.

It must be acknowledged that Lady Rowley was greatly grieved and thoroughly dismayed. It was not only that Mr. Glascock was the eldest son of a peer, but that he was represented by the poor suffering wife of the ill-tempered man to be a man blessed with a disposition sweet as an angel's. "And she would have liked him," Emily had said, "if it had not been for this unfortunate young man." Lady Rowley was not worse than are other mothers, not more ambitious, or more heartless, or more worldly. She was a good mother, loving her children, and thoroughly anxious

for their welfare. But she would have liked to be the mother-in-law of Lord Peterborough, and she would have liked, dearly, to see her second daughter removed from the danger of those rocks against which her eldest child had been shipwrecked. And when she asked after Hugh Stanbury, and his means of maintaining a wife, the statement which Mrs. Trevelyan made was not comforting. "He writes for a penny newspaper,—and, I believe, writes very well," Mrs. Trevelyan had said.

"For a penny newspaper! Is that respectable?"

"His aunt, Miss Stanbury, seemed to think not. But I suppose men of education do write for such things now. He says himself that it is very precarious as an employment."

"It must be precarious, Emily. And has he got nothing?"

"Not a penny of his own," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

Then Lady Rowley had thought again of Mr. Glascock, and of the family title, and of Markhams. And she thought of her present troubles, and of the Mandarins, and the state of Sir Marmaduke's balance at the bankers;—and of the other girls, and of all there was before her to do. Here had been a very Apollo among suitors kneeling at her child's feet, and the foolish girl had sent him away for the sake of a young man who wrote for a penny newspaper! Was it worth the while of any woman to bring up daughters with such results? Lady Rowley, therefore, when she was first introduced to Hugh Stanbury, was not prepared to receive him with open arms.

On this occasion the task of introducing him fell to Mrs. Trevelyan, and was done with much gracious-

ness. Emily knew that Hugh Stanbury was her friend, and would sympathise with her respecting her child. "You have heard what has happened to me?" she said. Stanbury, however, had heard nothing of that kidnapping of the child. Though to the Rowleys it seemed that such a deed of iniquity, done in the middle of London, must have been known to all the world, he had not as yet been told of it;—and now the story was given to him. Mrs. Trevelyan herself told it, with many tears and an agony of fresh grief; but still she told it as to one whom she regarded as a sure friend, and from whom she knew that she would receive sympathy. Sir Marmaduke sat by the while, still gloomy and out of humour. Why was their family sorrow to be laid bare to this stranger?

"It is the cruellest thing I ever heard," said Hugh.

"A dastardly deed," said Lady Rowley.

"But we all feel that for the time he can hardly know what he does," said Nora.

"And where is the child?" Stanbury asked.

"We have not the slightest idea," said Lady Rowley. "I have seen him, and he refuses to tell us. He did say that my daughter should see her boy; but he now accompanies his offer with such conditions that it is impossible to listen to him."

"And where is he?"

"We do not know where he lives. We can reach him only through a certain man——"

"Ah, I know the man," said Stanbury; "one who was a policeman once. His name is Bozzle."

"That is the man," said Sir Marmaduke. "I have seen him."

"And of course he will tell us nothing but what he

is told to tell us," continued Lady Rowley. "Can there be anything so horrible as this,—that a wife should be bound to communicate with her own husband respecting her own child through such a man as that?"

"One might possibly find out where he keeps the child," said Hugh.

"If you could manage that, Mr. Stanbury!" said Lady Rowley.

"I hardly see that it would do much good," said Hugh. "Indeed I do not know why he should keep the place a secret. I suppose he has a right to the boy until the mother shall have made good her claim before the court." He promised, however, that he would do his best to ascertain where the child was kept, and where Trevelyan resided, and then,—having been nearly an hour at the house,—he was forced to get up and take his leave. He had said not a word to any one of the business that had brought him there. He had not even whispered an assurance of his affection to Nora. Till the two elder ladies had come in, and the subject of the taking of the boy had been mooted, he had sat there as a perfect stranger. He thought that it was manifest enough that Nora had told her secret to no one. It seemed to him that Mrs. Trevelyan must have forgotten it;—that Nora herself must have forgotten it, if such forgetting could be possible! He got up, however, and took his leave, and was comforted in some slight degree by seeing that there was a tear in Nora's eye.

"Who is he?" demanded Sir Marmaduke, as soon as the door was closed.

"He is a young man who was an intimate friend of Louis's," answered Mrs. Trevelyan; "but he is so

no longer, because he sees how infatuated Louis has been."

"And why does he come here?"

"We know him very well," continued Mrs. Trevelyan. "It was he that arranged our journey down to Devonshire. He was very kind about it, and so were his mother and sister. We have every reason to be grateful to Mr. Stanbury." This was all very well, but Nora nevertheless felt that the interview had been anything but successful.

"Has he any profession?" asked Sir Marmaduke.

"He writes for the press," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"What do you mean;—books?"

"No;—for a newspaper."

"For a penny newspaper," said Nora boldly;—"for the Daily Record."

"Then I hope he won't come here any more," said Sir Marmaduke. Nora paused a moment, striving to find words for some speech which might be true to her love and yet not unseemly,—but finding no such words ready, she got up from her seat and walked out of the room. "What is the meaning of it all?" asked Sir Marmaduke. There was a silence for a while, and then he repeated his question in another form. "Is there any reason for his coming here,—about Nora?"

"I think he is attached to Nora," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"My dear," said Lady Rowley, "perhaps we had better not speak about it just now."

"I suppose he has not a penny in the world," said Sir Marmaduke.

"He has what he earns," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"If Nora understands her duty she will never let

me hear his name again," said Sir Marmaduke. Then there was nothing more said, and as soon as they could escape, both Lady Rowley and Mrs. Trevelyan left the room.

"I should have told you everything," said Nora to her mother that night. "I had no intention to keep anything a secret from you. But we have all been so unhappy about Louey, that we have had no heart to talk of anything else."

"I understand all that, my darling."

"And I had meant that you should tell papa, for I supposed that he would come. And I meant that he should go to papa himself. He intended that himself, —only, to-day,—as things turned out——"

"Just so, dearest;—but it does not seem that he has got any income. It would be very rash,—wouldn't it?"

"People must be rash sometimes. Everybody can't have an income without earning it. I suppose people in professions do marry without having fortunes."

"When they have settled professions, Nora."

"And why is not his a settled profession? I believe he receives quite as much at seven and twenty as Uncle Oliphant does at sixty."

"But your Uncle Oliphant's income is permanent."

"Lawyers don't have permanent incomes, or doctors,—or merchants."

"But those professions are regular and sure. They don't marry, without fortunes, till they have made their incomes sure."

"Mr. Stanbury's income is sure. I don't know why it shouldn't be sure. He goes on writing and writing every day, and it seems to me that of all professions

in the world it is the finest. I'd much sooner write for a newspaper than be one of those old musty, fusty lawyers, who'll say anything that they're paid to say."

"My dearest Nora, all that is nonsense. You know as well as I do that you should not marry a man when there is a doubt whether he can keep a house over your head;—that is his position."

"It is good enough for me, mamma."

"And what is his income from writing?"

"It is quite enough for me, mamma. The truth is I have promised, and I cannot go back from it. Dear, dear mamma, you won't quarrel with us, and oppose us, and make papa hard against us. You can do what you like with papa. I know that. Look at poor Emily. Plenty of money has not made her happy."

"If Mr. Glascock had only asked you a week sooner," said Lady Rowley, with a handkerchief to her eyes.

"But you see he didn't, mamma."

"When I think of it I cannot but weep;"—and the poor mother burst out into a full flood of tears—"such a man, so good, so gentle, and so truly devoted to you."

"Mamma, what's the good of that now?"

"Going down all the way to Devonshire after you!"

"So did Hugh, mamma."

"A position that any girl in England would have envied you. I cannot but feel it. And Emily says she is sure he would come back, if he got the very slightest encouragement."

"That is quite impossible, mamma."

"Why should it be impossible? Emily declares

that she never saw a man so much in love in her life; —and she says also that she believes he is abroad now simply because he is broken-hearted about it."

"Mr. Glascock, mamma, was very nice and good and all that; but indeed he is not the man to suffer from a broken heart. And Emily is quite mistaken. I told him the whole truth."

"What truth?"

"That there was somebody else that I did love. Then he said that of course that put an end to it all, and he wished me good-bye ever so calmly."

"How could you be so infatuated? Why should you have cut the ground away from your feet in that way?"

"Because I chose that there should be an end to it. Now there has been an end to it; and it is much better, mamma, that we should not think about Mr. Glascock any more. He will never come again to me,—and if he did, I could only say the same thing."

"You mustn't be surprised, Nora, if I'm unhappy; that is all. Of course I must feel it. Such a connection as it would have been for your sisters! Such a home for poor Emily in her trouble! And as for this other man——"

"Mamma, don't speak ill of him."

"If I say anything of him, I must say the truth," said Lady Rowley.

"Don't say anything against him, mamma, because he is to be my husband. Dear, dear mamma, you can't change me by anything you say. Perhaps I have been foolish; but it is settled now. Don't make me wretched by speaking against the man whom I mean to love all my life better than all the world."

"Think of Louis Trevelyan."

"I will think of no one but Hugh Stanbury. I tried not to love him, mamma. I tried to think that it was better to make believe that I loved Mr. Glascock. But he got the better of me, and conquered me, and I will never rebel against him. You may help me, mamma;—but you can't change me."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Sir Marmaduke at his Club.

Sir Marmaduke had come away from his brother-in-law the parson in much anger, for Mr. Outhouse, with that mixture of obstinacy and honesty which formed his character, had spoken hard words of Colonel Osborne, and words which by implication had been hard also against Emily Trevelyan. He had been very staunch to his niece when attacked by his niece's husband; but when his sympathies and assistance were invoked by Sir Marmaduke it seemed as though he had transferred his allegiance to the other side. He pointed out to the unhappy father that Colonel Osborne had behaved with great cruelty in going to Devonshire, that the Stanburys had been untrue to their trust in allowing him to enter the house, and that Emily had been "indiscreet" in receiving him. When a young woman is called indiscreet by her friends it may be assumed that her character is very seriously assailed. Sir Marmaduke had understood this, and on hearing the word had become wroth with his brother-in-law. There had been hot words between them, and Mr. Outhouse would not yield an inch or retract a syllable. He conceived it to be his duty to advise the father to

caution his daughter with severity, to quarrel absolutely with Colonel Osborne, and to let Trevelyan know that this had been done. As to the child, Mr. Outhouse expressed a strong opinion that the father was legally entitled to the custody of his boy, and that nothing could be done to recover the child, except what might be done with the father's consent. In fact, Mr. Outhouse made himself exceedingly disagreeable, and sent away Sir Marmaduke with a very heavy heart. Could it really be possible that his old friend Fred Osborne, who seven or eight-and-twenty years ago had been potent among young ladies, had really been making love to his old friend's married daughter? Sir Marmaduke looked into himself, and conceived it to be quite out of the question that he should make love to any one. A good dinner, good wine, a good cigar, an easy chair, and a rubber of whist,—all these things, with no work to do, and men of his own standing around him were the pleasures of life which Sir Marmaduke desired. Now Fred Osborne was an older man than he, and though Fred Osborne did keep up a foolish system of padded clothes and dyed whiskers, still,—at fifty-two or fifty-three,—surely a man might be reckoned safe. And then, too, that ancient friendship! Sir Marmaduke, who had lived all his life in the comparative seclusion of a colony, thought perhaps more of that ancient friendship than did the Colonel, who had lived amidst the blaze of London life, and who had had many opportunities of changing his friends. Some inkling of all this made its way into Sir Marmaduke's bosom, as he thought of it with bitterness; and he determined that he would have it out with his friend.

Hitherto he had enjoyed very few of those plea-

sant hours which he had anticipated on his journey homewards. He had had no heart to go to his club, and he had fancied that Colonel Osborne had been a little backward in looking him up, and providing him with amusement. He had suggested this to his wife, and she had told him that the Colonel had been right not to come to Manchester Street. "I have told Emily," said Lady Rowley, "that she must not meet him, and she is quite of the same opinion." Nevertheless, there had been remissness. Sir Marmaduke felt that it was so, in spite of his wife's excuses. In this way he was becoming sore with everybody, and very unhappy. It did not at all improve his temper when he was told that his second daughter had refused an offer from Lord Peterborough's eldest son. "Then she may go into the workhouse for me," the angry father had said, declaring at the same time that he would never give his consent to her marriage with the man who "did dirty work" for the Daily Record,—as he, with his paternal wisdom, chose to express it. But this cruel phrase was not spoken in Nora's hearing, nor was it repeated to her. Lady Rowley knew her husband, and was aware that he would on occasions change his opinion.

It was not till two or three days after his visit to St. Didùulph's that he met Colonel Osborne. The Easter recess was then over, and Colonel Osborne had just returned to London. They met on the door-steps of "The Acrobats," and the Colonel immediately began with an apology. "I have been so sorry to be away just when you are here;—upon my word I have. But I was obliged to go down to the duchess's. I had promised early in the winter; and those people are so

angry if you put them off. By George, it's almost as bad as putting off royalty."

"D——n the duchess," said Sir Marmaduke.

"With all my heart," said the Colonel;—"only I thought it as well that I should tell you the truth."

"What I mean is, that the duchess and her people make no difference to me. I hope you had a pleasant time; that's all."

"Well;—yes, we had. One must get away somewhere at Easter. There is no one left at the club, and there's no House, and no one asks one to dinner in town. In fact, if one didn't go away one wouldn't know what to do. There were ever so many people there that I liked to meet. Lady Glencora was there, and uncommon pleasant she made it. That woman has more to say for herself than any half-dozen men that I know. And Lord Cantrip, your chief, was there. He said a word or two to me about you."

"What sort of a word?"

"He says he wishes you would read up some blue books, or papers, or reports, or something of that kind, which he says that some of his fellows have sent you. It seems that there are some new rules, or orders, or fashions, which he wants you to have at your fingers' ends. Nothing could be more civil than he was,—but he just wished me to mention this, knowing that you and I are likely to see each other."

"I wish I had never come over," said Sir Marmaduke.

"Why so?"

"They didn't bother me with their new rules and fashions over there. When the papers came somebody

read them, and that was enough. I could do what they wanted me to do there."

"And so you will here,—after a bit."

"I'm not so sure of that. Those young fellows seem to forget that an old dog can't learn new tricks. They've got a young brisk fellow there who seems to think that a man should be an encyclopedia of knowledge because he has lived in a colony over twenty years."

"That's the new under-secretary."

"Never mind who it is. Osborne, just come up to the library, will you? I want to speak to you." Then Sir Marmaduke, with considerable solemnity, led the way up to the most deserted room in the club, and Colonel Osborne followed him, well knowing that something was to be said about Emily Trevelyan.

Sir Marmaduke seated himself on a sofa, and his friend sat close beside him. The room was quite deserted. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and the club was full of men. There were men in the morning-room, and men in the drawing-room, and men in the card-room, and men in the billiard-room; but no better choice of a chamber for a conference intended to be silent and secret could have been made in all London than that which had induced Sir Marmaduke to take his friend into the library of "The Acrobats." And yet a great deal of money had been spent in providing this library for "The Acrobats." Sir Marmaduke sat for awhile silent, and had he sat silent for an hour, Colonel Osborne would not have interrupted him. Then, at last, he began, with a voice that was intended to be serious, but which struck upon the ear of his companion as

being affected and unlike the owner of it. "This is a very sad thing about my poor girl," said Sir Marmaduke.

"Indeed it is. There is only one thing to be said about it, Rowley."

"And what's that?"

"The man must be mad."

"He is not so mad as to give us any relief by his madness,—poor as such comfort would be. He has got Emily's child away from her, and I think it will about kill her. And what is to become of her? As to taking her back to the islands without her child, it is out of the question. I never knew anything so cruel in my life."

"And so absurd, you know."

"Ah,—that's just the question. If anybody had asked me, I should have said that you were the man of all men whom I could have best trusted."

"Do you doubt it now?"

"I don't know what to think."

"Do you mean to say that you suspect me,—and your daughter too?"

"No;—by heavens! Poor dear. If I suspected her, there would be an end of all things with me. I could never get over that. No;—I don't suspect her!" Sir Marmaduke had now dropped his affected tone, and was speaking with natural energy.

"But you do me?"

"No;—if I did, I don't suppose I should be sitting with you here; but they tell me——."

"They tell you what?"

"They tell me that,—that you did not behave

wisely about it. Why could you not let her alone when you found out how matters were going?"

"Who has been telling you this, Rowley?"

Sir Marmaduke considered for awhile, and then, remembering that Colonel Osborne could hardly quarrel with a clergyman, told him the truth. "Outhouse says that you have done her an irretrievable injury by going down to Devonshire to her, and by writing to her."

"Outhouse is an ass."

"That is easily said;—but why did you go?"

"And why should I not go? What the deuce! Because a man like that chooses to take vagaries into his head I am not to see my own godchild!" Sir Marmaduke tried to remember whether the Colonel was in fact the godfather of his eldest daughter, but he found that his mind was quite a blank about his children's godfathers and godmothers. "And as for the letters;—I wish you could see them. The only letters which had in them a word of importance were those about your coming home. I was anxious to get that arranged, not only for your sake, but because she was so eager about it."

"God bless her, poor child," said Sir Marmaduke, rubbing the tears away from his eyes with his red silk pocket-handkerchief.

"I will acknowledge that those letters,—there may have been one or two,—were the beginning of the trouble. It was these that made this man show himself to be a lunatic. I do admit that. I was bound not to talk about your coming, and I told her to keep the secret. He went spying about, and found her letters, I suppose,—and then he took fire, because there

was to be a secret from him. Dirty, mean dog! And now I'm to be told by such a fellow as Outhouse that it's my fault, that I have caused all the trouble, because, when I happened to be in Devonshire, I went to see your daughter!" We must do the Colonel the justice of supposing that he had by this time quite taught himself to believe that the church porch at Cockchaffington had been the motive cause of his journey into Devonshire. "Upon my word it is too hard," continued he indignantly. "As for Outhouse,—only for the gown upon his back, I'd pull his nose. And I wish that you would tell him that I say so."

"There is trouble enough without that," said Sir Marmaduke.

"But it is hard. By G—, it is hard. There is this comfort;—if it hadn't been me, it would have been some one else. Such a man as that couldn't have gone two or three years, without being jealous of some one. And as for poor Emily, she is better off perhaps with an accusation so absurd as this, than she might have been had her name been joined with a younger man, or with one whom you would have less reason for trusting."

There was so much that seemed to be sensible in this, and it was spoken with so well assumed a tone of injured innocence, that Sir Marmaduke felt that he had nothing more to say. He muttered something further about the cruelty of the case, and then slunk away out of the club, and made his way home to the dull gloomy house in Manchester Street. There was no comfort for him there;—but neither was there any comfort for him at the club. And why did that vexatious Secretary of State send him messages about

blue books? As he went, he expressed sundry wishes that he was back at the Mandarins, and told himself that it would be well that he should remain there till he died.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Mysterious Agencies.

When the thirty-first of March arrived, Exeter had not as yet been made gay with the marriage festivities of Mr. Gibson and Camilla French. And this delay had not been the fault of Camilla. Camilla had been ready, and when, about the middle of the month, it was hinted to her that some postponement was necessary, she spoke her mind out plainly, and declared that she was not going to stand that kind of thing. The communication had not been made to her by Mr. Gibson in person. For some days previously he had not been seen at Heavitree, and Camilla had from day to day become more black, gloomy, and harsh in her manners both to her mother and her sisters. Little notes had come and little notes had gone, but no one in the house, except Camilla herself, knew what those notes contained. She would not condescend to complain to Arabella; nor did she say much in condemnation of her lover to Mrs. French, till the blow came. With unremitting attention she pursued the great business of her wedding garments, and exacted from the unfortunate Arabella an amount of work equal to her own, —of thankless work, as is the custom of embryo brides with their unmarried sisters. And she drew with great audacity on the somewhat slender means of the family for the amount of feminine gear necessary to enable her to go into Mr. Gibson's house with something of the éclat of

a well-provided bride. When Mrs. French hesitated, and then expostulated, Camilla replied that she did not expect to be married above once, and that in no cheaper or more productive way than this could her mother allow her to consume her share of the family resources. "What matter, mamma, if you do have to borrow a little money? Mr. Burgess will let you have it when he knows why. And as I shan't be eating and drinking at home any more, nor yet getting my things here, I have a right to expect it." And she ended by expressing an opinion, in Arabella's hearing, that any daughter of a house who proves herself to be capable of getting a husband for herself, is entitled to expect that those left at home shall pinch themselves for a time, in order that she may go forth to the world in a respectable way, and be a credit to the family.

Then came the blow. Mr. Gibson had not been at the house for some days, but the notes had been going and coming. At last Mr. Gibson came himself; but, as it happened, when he came Camilla was out shopping. In these days she often did go out shopping between eleven and one, carrying her sister with her. It must have been but a poor pleasure for Arabella, this witnessing the purchases made, seeing the pleasant draperies and handling the real linens and admiring the fine cambrics spread out before them on the shop counters by obsequious attendants. And the questions asked of her by her sister, whether this was good enough for so august an occasion, or that sufficiently handsome, must have been harassing. She could not have failed to remember that it ought all to have been done for her,—that had she not been treated with monstrous injustice, with most unsisterly cruelty, all these good

things would have been spread on her behoof. But she went on and endured it, and worked diligently with her needle, and folded and unfolded as she was desired, and became as it were quite a younger sister in the house,—creeping out by herself now and again into the purlieus of the city, to find such consolation as she might receive from her solitary thoughts.

But Arabella and Camilla were both away when Mr. Gibson called to tell Mrs. French of his altered plans. And as he asked, not for his lady-love, but for Mrs. French herself, it is probable that he watched his opportunity and that he knew to what cares his Camilla was then devoting herself. "Perhaps it is quite as well that I should find you alone," he said, after sundry preludes, to his future mother-in-law, "because you can make Camilla understand this better than I can. I must put off the day for about three weeks."

"Three weeks, Mr. Gibson?"

"Or a month. Perhaps we had better say the 29th of April." Mr. Gibson had by this time thrown off every fear that he might have entertained of the mother, and could speak to her of such an unwarrantable change of plans with tolerable equanimity.

"But I don't know that that will suit Camilla at all."

"She can name any other day she pleases, of course; —that is, in May."

"But why is this to be?"

"There are things about money, Mrs. French, which I cannot arrange sooner. And I find that unfortunately I must go up to London." Though many other questions were asked, nothing further was got out of Mr. Gibson on that occasion; and he left the house with a

perfect understanding on his own part,—and on that of Mrs. French,—that the marriage was postponed till some day still to be fixed, but which could not and should not be before the 29th of April. Mrs. French asked him why he did not come up and see Camilla. He replied,—false man that he was,—that he had hoped to have seen her this morning, and that he would come again before the week was over.

Then it was that Camilla spoke her mind out plainly. "I shall go to his house at once," she said, "and find out all about it. I don't understand it. I don't understand it at all; and I won't put up with it. He shall know who he has to deal with, if he plays tricks upon me. Mamma, I wonder you let him out of the house, till you had made him come back to his old day."

"What could I do, my dear?"

"What could you do? Shake him out of it,—as I would have done. But he didn't dare to tell me,—because he is a coward."

Camilla in all this showed her spirit; but she allowed her anger to hurry her away into an indiscretion. Arabella was present, and Camilla should have repressed her rage.

"I don't think he's at all a coward," said Arabella.

"That's my business. I suppose I'm entitled to know what he is better than you."

"All the same I don't think Mr. Gibson is at all a coward," said Arabella, again pleading the cause of the man who had misused her.

"Now, Arabella, I won't take any interference from you; mind that. I say it was cowardly, and he should have come to me. It's my concern, and I shall go to him. I'm not going to be stopped by any shilly-shally

nonsense, when my future respectability, perhaps, is at stake. All Exeter knows that the marriage is to take place on the 31st of this month."

On the next day Camilla absolutely did go to Mr. Gibson's house at an early hour, at nine, when, as she thought, he would surely be at breakfast. But he had flown. He had left Exeter that morning by an early train, and his servant thought that he had gone to London. On the next morning Camilla got a note from him, written in London. It affected to be very cheery and affectionate, beginning "Dearest Cammy," and alluding to the postponement of his wedding as though it were a thing so fixed as to require no further question. Camilla answered this letter, still in much wrath, complaining, protesting, expostulating;—throwing in his teeth the fact that the day had been fixed by him, and not by her. And she added a postscript in the following momentous words;—"If you have any respect for the name of your future wife, you will fall back upon your first arrangement." To this she got simply a line of an answer, declaring that this falling back was impossible, and then nothing was heard of him for ten days. He had gone from Tuesday to Saturday week;—and the first that Camilla saw of him was his presence in the reading desk when he chaunted the cathedral service as priest-vicar on the Sunday.

At this time Arabella was very ill, and was confined to her bed. Mr. Martin declared that her system had become low from over anxiety,—that she was nervous, weak, and liable to hysterics,—that her feelings were in fact too many for her,—and that her efforts to overcome them, and to face the realities of the world, had exhausted her. This was, of course, not said openly,

at the town-cross of Exeter; but such was the opinion which Mr. Martin gave in confidence to the mother. "Fiddle-de-dee!" said Camilla, when she was told of feelings, susceptibilities, and hysterics. At the present moment she had a claim to the undivided interest of the family, and she believed that her sister's illness was feigned in order to defraud her of her rights. "My dear, she is ill," said Mrs. French. "Then let her have a dose of salts," said the stern Camilla. This was on the Sunday afternoon. Camilla had endeavoured to see Mr. Gibson as he came out of the cathedral, but had failed. Mr. Gibson had been detained within the building,—no doubt by duties connected with the choral services. On that evening he got a note from Camilla, and quite early on the Monday morning he came up to Heavitree.

"You will find her in the drawing-room," said Mrs. French, as she opened the hall-door for him. There was a smile on her face as she spoke, but it was a forced smile. Mr. Gibson did not smile at all.

"Is it all right with her?" he asked.

"Well;—you had better go to her. You see, Mr. Gibson, young ladies, when they are going to be married, think that they ought to have their own way a little, just for the last time, you know." He took no notice of the joke, but went with slow steps up to the drawing-room. It would be inquiring too curiously to ask whether Camilla, when she embraced him, discerned that he had fortified his courage that morning with a glass of curaçoa.

"What does all this mean, Thomas?" was the first question that Camilla asked when the embrace was over.

"All what mean, dear?"

"This untoward delay? Thomas, you have almost broken my heart. You have been away, and I have not heard from you."

"I wrote twice, Camilla."

"And what sort of letters? If there is anything the matter, Thomas, you had better tell me at once." She paused, but Thomas held his tongue. "I don't suppose you want to kill me."

"God forbid," said Thomas.

"But you will. What must everybody think of me in the city when they find that it is put off. Poor mamma has been dreadful;—quite dreadful! And here is Arabella now laid up on a bed of sickness." This, too, was indiscreet. Camilla should have said nothing about her sister's sickness.

"I have been so sorry to hear about dear Bella," said Mr. Gibson.

"I don't suppose she's very bad," said Camilla, "but of course we all feel it. Of course we're upset. As for me, I bear up; because I've that spirit that I won't give way if it's ever so; but, upon my word, it tries me hard. What is the meaning of it, Thomas?"

But Thomas had nothing to say beyond what he had said before to Mrs. French. He was very particular, he said, about money; and certain money matters made it incumbent on him not to marry before the 29th of April. When Camilla suggested to him that as she was to be his wife, she ought to know all about his money matters, he told her that she should,—some day. When they were married, he would tell her all. Camilla talked a great deal, and said some things that were very severe. Mr. Gibson did not enjoy his morn-

ing, but he endured the upbraidings of his fair one with more firmness than might perhaps have been expected from him. He left all the talking to Camilla; but when he got up to leave her, the 29th of April had been fixed, with some sort of assent from her, as the day on which she was really to become Mrs. Gibson.

When he left the room, he again met Mrs. French on the landing-place. She hesitated a moment, waiting to see whether the door would be shut; but the door could not be shut, as Camilla was standing in the entrance. "Mr. Gibson," said Mrs. French, in a voice that was scarcely a whisper, "would you mind stepping in and seeing poor Bella for a moment?"

"Why;—she is in bed," said Camilla.

"Yes;—she is in bed; but she thinks it would be a comfort to her. She has seen nobody these four days except Mr. Martin, and she thinks it would comfort her to have a word or two with Mr. Gibson." Now Mr. Gibson was not only going to be Bella's brother-in-law, but he was also a clergyman. Camilla in her heart believed that the half-clerical aspect which her mother had given to the request was false and hypocritical. There were special reasons why Bella should not have wished to see Mr. Gibson in her bedroom, at any rate till Mr. Gibson had become her brother-in-law. The expression of such a wish at the present moment was almost indecent.

"You'll be there with them?" said Camilla. Mr. Gibson blushed up to his ears as he heard the suggestion. "Of course you'll be there with them, mamma."

"No, my dear, I think not. I fancy she wishes him to read to her,—or something of that sort." Then Mr. Gibson, without speaking a word, but still blushing

up to his ears, was taken to Arabella's room; and Camilla, flouncing into the drawing-room, banged the door behind her. She had hitherto fought her battle with considerable skill and with great courage;—but her very success had made her imprudent. She had become so imperious in the great position which she had reached, that she could not control her temper or wait till her power was confirmed. The banging of that door was heard through the whole house, and every one knew why it was banged. She threw herself on to a sofa, and then, instantly rising again, paced the room with quick step. Could it be possible that there was treachery? Was it on the cards that that weak, poor creature, Bella, was intriguing once again to defraud her of her husband? There were different things that she now remembered. Arabella, in that moment of bliss in which she had conceived herself to be engaged to Mr. Gibson, had discarded her chignon. Then she had resumed it,—in all its monstrous proportions. Since that it had been lessened by degrees, and brought down, through various interesting but abnormal shapes, to a size which would hardly have drawn forth any anathema from Miss Stanbury. And now, on this very morning, Arabella had put on a clean nightcap, with muslin frills. It is perhaps not unnatural that a sick lady, preparing to receive a clergyman in her bedroom, should put on a clean nightcap,—but to suspicious eyes small causes suffice to create alarm. And if there were any such hideous wickedness in the wind, had Arabella any colleague in her villainy? Could it be that the mother was plotting against her daughter's happiness and respectability? Camilla was well aware that her mamma would at first

have preferred to give Arabella to Mr. Gibson, had the choice in the matter been left to her. But now, when the thing had been settled before all the world, would not such treatment on a mother's part be equal to infanticide? And then as to Mr. Gibson himself! Camilla was not prone to think little of her own charms, but she had been unable not to perceive that her lover had become negligent in his personal attentions to her. An accepted lover, who deserves to have been accepted, should devote every hour at his command to his mistress. But Mr. Gibson had of late been so chary of his presence at Heavitree, that Camilla could not but have known that he took no delight in coming thither. She had acknowledged this to herself; but she had consoled herself with the reflection that marriage would make this all right. Mr. Gibson was not the man to stray from his wife, and she could trust herself to obtain a sufficient hold upon her husband hereafter, partly by the strength of her tongue, partly by the ascendancy of her spirit, and partly, also, by the comforts which she would provide for him. She had not doubted but that it would be all well when they should be married;—but how if, even now, there should be no marriage for her? Camilla French had never heard of Creusa and of Jason, but as she paced her mother's drawing-room that morning she was a Medea in spirit. If any plot of that kind should be in the wind, she would do such things that all Devonshire should hear of her wrongs and of her revenge!

In the meantime Mr. Gibson was sitting by Arabella's bedside, while Mrs. French was trying to make herself busy in her own chamber, next door. There had been a reading of some chapter of the Bible,—or of some

portion of a chapter. And Mr. Gibson, as he read, and Arabella, as she listened, had endeavoured to take to their hearts and to make use of the word which they heard. The poor young woman, when she begged her mother to send to her the man, who was so dear to her, did so with some half-formed condition that it would be good for her to hear a clergyman read to her. But now the chapter had been read, and the book was back in Mr. Gibson's pocket, and he was sitting with his hand on the bed. "She is so very arrogant," said Bella,—"and so domineering." To this Mr. Gibson made no reply. "I'm sure I have endeavoured to bear it well, though you must have known what I have suffered, Thomas. Nobody can understand it so well as you do."

"I wish I had never been born," said Mr. Gibson tragically.

"Don't say that, Thomas,—because it's wicked."

"But I do. See all the harm I have done;—and yet I did not mean it."

"You must try and do the best you can now. I am not saying what that should be. I am not dictating to you. You are a man, and, of course, you must judge for yourself. But I will say this. You shouldn't do anything just because it is the easiest. I don't suppose I should live after it. I don't indeed. But that should not signify to you."

"I don't suppose that any man was ever before in such a terrible position since the world began."

"It is difficult;—I am sure of that, Thomas."

"And I have meant to be so true. I fancy sometimes that some mysterious agency interferes with the affairs of a man and drives him on,—and on,—and on,—almost,

—till he doesn't know where it drives him." As he said this in a voice that was quite sepulchral in its tone, he felt some consolation in the conviction that this mysterious agency could not affect a man without embuing him with a certain amount of grandeur,—very uncomfortable, indeed, in its nature, but still having considerable value as a counterpoise. Pride must bear pain;—but pain is recompensed by pride.

"She is so strong, Thomas, that she can put up with anything," said Arabella, in a whisper.

"Strong;—yes," said he, with a shudder;—"she is strong enough."

"And as for love——"

"Don't talk about it," said he, getting up from his chair. "Don't talk about it. You will drive me frantic."

"You know what my feelings are, Thomas; you have always known them. There has been no change since I was the young thing you first knew me." As she spoke, she just touched his hand with hers; but he did not seem to notice this, sitting with his elbow on the arm of his chair and his forehead on his hand. In reply to what she said to him, he merely shook his head,—not intending to imply thereby any doubt of the truth of her assertion. "You have now to make up your mind, and to be bold, Thomas," continued Arabella. She says that you are a coward; but I know that you are no coward. I told her so, and she said that I was interfering. Oh,—that she should be able to tell me that I interfere when I defend you!"

"I must go," said Mr. Gibson, jumping up from his chair. "I must go. Bella, I cannot stand this any longer. It is too much for me. I will pray that

I may decide aright. God bless you!" Then he kissed her brow as she lay in bed, and hurried out of the room.

He had hoped to go from the house without further converse with any of its inmates; for his mind was disturbed, and he longed to be at rest. But he was not allowed to escape so easily. Camilla met him at the dining-room door, and accosted him with a smile. There had been time for much meditation during the last half hour, and Camilla had meditated. "How do you find her, Thomas?" she asked.

"She seems weak, but I believe she is better. I have been reading to her."

"Come in, Thomas;—will you not? It is bad for us to stand talking on the stairs. Dear Thomas, don't let us be so cold to each other." He had no alternative but to put his arm round her waist, and kiss her, thinking, as he did so, of the mysterious agency which afflicted him. "Tell me that you love me, Thomas," she said.

"Of course I love you." The question is not a pleasant one when put by a lady to a gentleman whose affections towards her are not strong, and it requires a very good actor to produce an efficient answer.

"I hope you do, Thomas. It would be sad, indeed, if you did not. You are not weary of your Camilla,—are you?"

For a moment there came upon him an idea that he would confess that he was weary of her, but he found at once that such an effort was beyond his powers. "How can you ask such a question?" he said.

"Because you do not—come to me." Camilla, as

she spoke, laid her head upon his shoulder and wept. "And now you have been five minutes with me and nearly an hour with Bella."

"She wanted me to read to her," said Mr. Gibson; —and he hated himself thoroughly as he said it.

"And now you want to get away as fast as you can," continued Camilla.

"Because of the morning service," said Mr. Gibson. This was quite true, and yet he hated himself again for saying it. As Camilla knew the truth of the last plea, she was obliged to let him go; but she made him swear before he went that he loved her dearly. "I think it's all right," she said to herself as he went down the stairs. "I don't think he'd dare make it wrong. If he does;—o-oh!"

Mr. Gibson, as he walked into Exeter, endeavoured to justify his own conduct to himself. There was no moment, he declared to himself, in which he had not endeavoured to do right. Seeing the manner in which he had been placed among these two young women, both of whom had fallen in love with him, how could he have saved himself from vacillation? And by what untoward chance had it come to pass that he had now learned to dislike so vigorously, almost to hate, the one whom he had been for a moment sufficiently infatuated to think that he loved?

But with all his arguments he did not succeed in justifying to himself his own conduct, and he hated himself.

END OF VOL. II.

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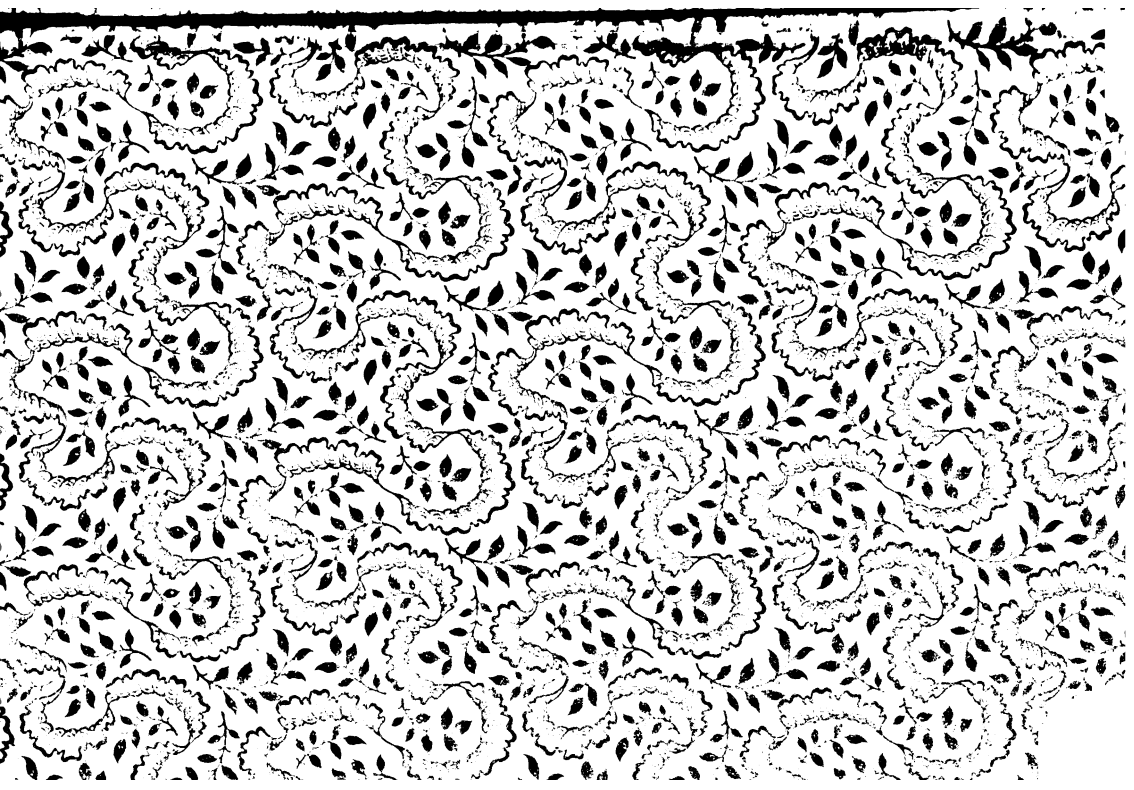

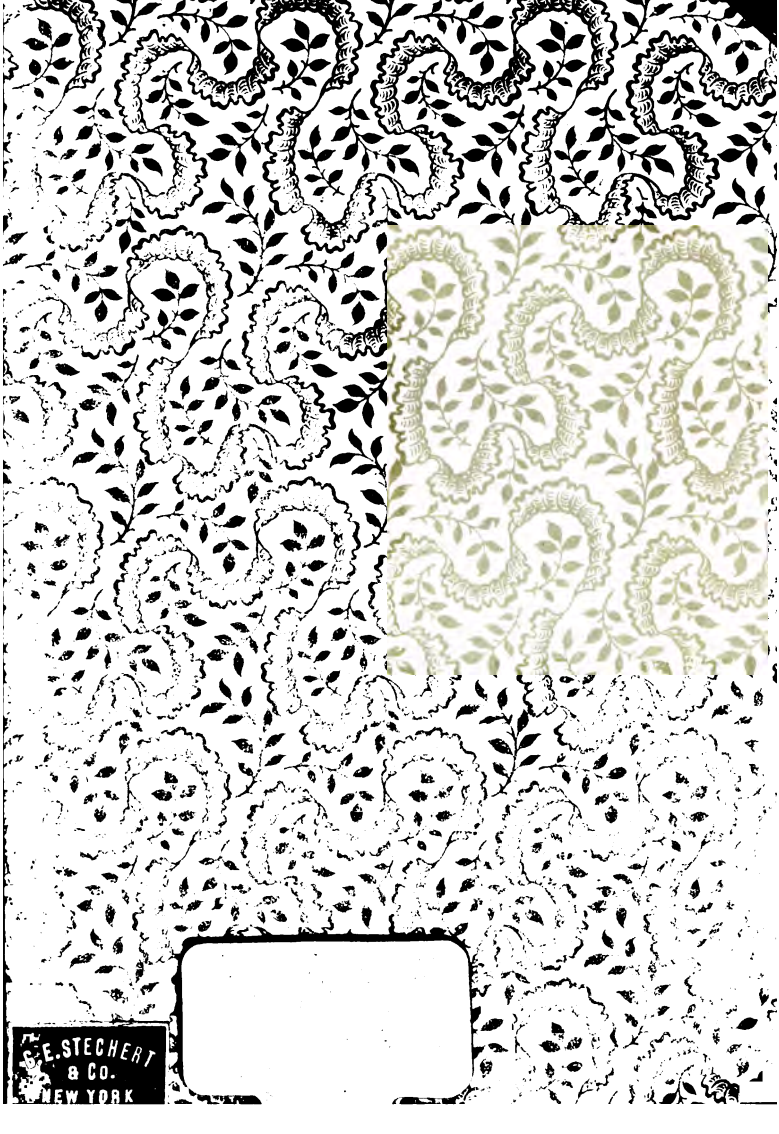
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